

CROSS FOSTERING PIGLETS

Fostering means removing a piglet from its natural mother to another sow so that it can gain access to a teat, suckle the foster mother, and survive.

COLOSTRUM

- Piglets are born with no acquired immunity against disease until they consume colostrum.
- The colostrum contains antibodies to the infections that the sow is exposed to prior to farrowing, whether naturally or by vaccination.
- Colostrum is a great source of antibodies, energy, and water for the new-born piglet that has very little energy reserves at birth.
- As early as three hours after birth the piglet can only absorb 50% of the antibodies in the colostrum.
- The capacity of piglets to absorb antibodies declines rapidly from about 6 hours after being born and is greatly reduced by 24 hours.
- Therefore, each piglet needs to consume at least 200ml of colostrum to provide it with an adequate level of immunity.
- The composition of colostrum changes to milk within 36 hours of farrowing.

- A good stockperson will assist weak piglets to suckle and get colostrum as soon as possible after birth and repeat this until they can suckle by themselves.

WHEN FOSTERING

- Assess the rearing capacity of each sow based on the number of exposed functional teats.
- Do not foster piglets in the first 12 hours so that they get enough colostrum from their own mother if possible.
- The number of piglets on each sow must not exceed the number of exposed healthy functional teats.
- Select sows with long slender teats especially if the piglets being fostered are small.
- Having the correct number of piglets on each sow is more important than matching piglets by weight.
- Try as much as possible to do all fostering within the first 24 hours of life to minimise the disruption for the piglets and to reduce any risk of disease transfer between piglets.