



## Establishing piglets early reduces pen variation

### Farm facts

**Name:** Poolfoot Ltd.  
**Location:** Fylde, Lancashire  
**Farm size & enterprise:** 325 sow farrow to finish indoors

### Benefits

- Less variation between piglets and pens
- Fewer 'tail enders'
- Reduced labour requirement to prepare porridge, freeing up time for other activities

### Background

At weaning the piglet experiences multiple challenges and as a result daily liveweight gain can be reduced by up to 200 g/day. There is evidence that growth rate during the first few weeks post-weaning is positively correlated with subsequent lifetime performance, it is therefore important to establish the weaner immediately to maintain growth rates and reduce pen variation.



### Key to success

- Soiled water troughs can deter piglets from drinking, by providing additional bite drinkers a clean supply of water will be available at all times.
- Feed can quickly become stale if it is left sitting in the trough for long periods, by feeding less but more frequently feed turnover is increased and freshness is maintained.
- Using a new mobile light enables supplementary lighting to be provided where it is needed when it is needed.
- Moving piglets during the pre-weaning period can disrupt suckling and growth rates, by constructing an additional farrowing annex piglets can remain in their original pen with the sow throughout this period, reducing disruption, maximising weaning weights and minimising variation.

“ The provision of additional drinkers seems to have helped piglets to establish more quickly after weaning, they are coping better with challenges and are more uniform. *Alison Newsham, farm manager* ”



### The system

Piglet nutrition, facilities and procedures were reviewed, following this, a number of modifications were made. Bite drinkers were introduced to the weaner accommodation to provide additional water to that being supplied via the troughs. Piglets are now fed porridge on day one post-weaning only, instead of twice a day for 3-4 days, which was time consuming, and piglets are now fed less per feed but more often.

Lighting in the weaner accommodation has been improved, with a supplementary light now left on for 24 hours a day for the first seven days post-weaning. This encourages exploration by the piglets and as a result increases feed intake and growth. In addition, a new farrowing annex was constructed to provide extra space during busy farrowing periods, this means that there is less chance of litters having to be moved during the pre-weaning period, which would disrupt the piglets' environment and feeding pattern.

For more information on establishing the weaned piglet see Action for Productivity number 9.