



BREEDING

Creep Training

Simple changes cut pre-weaning mortality rates

Farm facts

Location: Cornwall

Farm size & enterprise: 300 sow farrow to finish

Benefits

- Reduced piglet mortality
- More viable, healthy piglets
- Increased staff morale

Background

Pre-weaning mortality on this unit was averaging 14.8%, with half of these deaths occurring within the first three days. The piglets were becoming chilled as they weren't drying fast enough after birth or using the warm creep area. It is essential that piglets are "trained" to use the creep so that they will return to it when not suckling as chilled piglets find it harder to reach the teat, become weak and have an increased risk of being laid on.

Key to success

- Confine piglets in the creep area for 1 hour during the first 24 hours to train the piglets to use the creep
- Improve the farrowing environment by increasing the amount of paper bedding used in crates
- The changes are simple and take very little time for staff to carry out
- The system is adaptable, it doesn't matter what type of creep you use, even a simple box can be used to hold piglets in the correct area



A board is placed across these plastic strips to contain the piglets within the creep for 1 hour

“ Creep training is not an arduous task as piglets learn the behaviour of using creeps within the first 40-48 hours of life. ”
Farm vet

Pre-weaning mortality during the trial period

Trial 1	Pre weaning mortality
Without creep training	19.9%
With creep training	11.5%
Trial 2	
Without creep training	18.5%
With creep training	14.5%

The system

Piglets were confined in the warm creep area for 1 hour during the first 24 hours post-farrowing by placing a board across the creep.

By recording when the deaths were actually occurring, and what the cause of death was, the producer discovered that in some litters up to 15% of the piglets were dying before the litter was inspected ie during farrowing or the first few hours post-farrowing. As a result, the producer decided to use more paper bedding at the back of the farrowing crates to improve the environment for the newborn piglet, as the paper absorbs moisture meaning that piglets dry off more quickly.

For more information on creep management see Action for Productivity 6: Creep Feeding.