

Practice abstract

Mobile farrowing huts for sows and piglets

Problem

Common outdoor cage-free production systems for pigs do not tackle the manifold aspects of animal and farmer welfare. These systems have many limitations that include piglet mortality due to crushing by the sow and climate issues, difficult pasture rotation, and safe work conditions for farmers.

Solution

Mobile farrowing huts are designed to improve housing conditions of sows and piglets and to increase welfare and safety of animals and farmers.

Benefits

- Reduction in piglet mortality
- Better protection from extreme temperature
- Better housing conditions and comfort for both sows and piglets
- Mobility and pasture rotation
- Reduced environmental impact
- Facilitated care and management
- Good working environment for farmers: safe working conditions, comfort and easy cleaning

Applicability box

Theme

Piglet mortality, farrowing sows housing

Keywords

Animal welfare, animal husbandry, reproductive performance, animal housing equipment

Context

Easy access with tractors for transport, on level areas, avoid steep areas

Application time

Any time (farrowing to weaning)

Required time

Assembly of the huts and transportation

Period of impact

All year

Equipment

Tractor or similar machine to transport the mobile huts

Best in

Outdoor organic and low input production systems

Practical recommendation

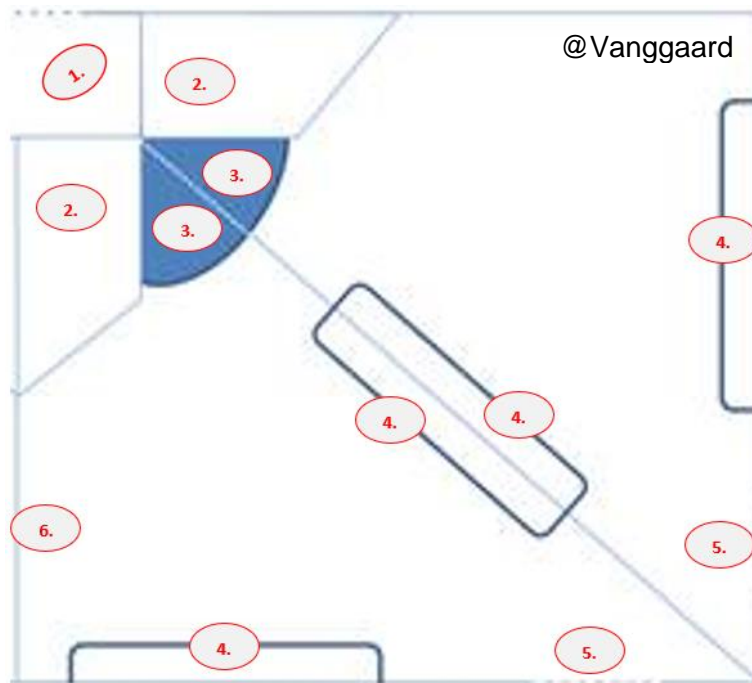
- Farrowing huts can hold two or four sows or be individual to avoid eventual competition between sows
- The farrowing huts (Picture 1, 2 and 3) should be provided with:
 - Adequate access for the farmer to guarantee thorough and protected inspection of the hut
 - Dedicated area such as a platform should be designed to provide feed/water to piglets
 - Protected piglet cave with a heat lamp and a top lid that can be opened for checking
 - A water and feed trough for each sow
 - Steel hoops/anti-crushing bar or other equipment's to minimize piglet mortality and to help the sow to lie down
 - An exit door for sows and piglets with plastic curtains for cold periods
 - Additional ventilation for warm seasons opening doors and wall panels
- Farmers' management and animal care may need adjustment, i.e. feeding and watering can be more time-consuming
- Choose level areas for the installation and mobilize the farrowing huts
- Hot climates may need extra ventilation or other adaptations
- Reinforcement of the structure may be needed for heavy non-commercial breeds



Picture 1: Outside view of a farrowing hut for four sows. Photo: ©Vanggaard Staldmontage ApS



Picture 2: Inside view of farrowing hut for two sows, with entrance door for farmer in the back and upside wall part opened for ventilation on the left, with water and feed trough on the ground beside piglet cave with heat lamp, and with steel hoops/anti-crushing bars on the walls to minimize piglet mortality and help the sow to lie down. Photo: ©Vanggaard Staldmontage ApS



Picture 3: Farrowing hut design for 2 sows, with 1) Entrance door for farmer (fully upright position) and platform for allocation of feed/water + overview of the inside hut; 2) Piglet cave with heater and top lid that can be opened; 3) Water and feed trough; 4) Steel hoops/anti-crushing bar to minimize piglet mortality, and help the sow to lie down (right side); 5) Exit door for sows and piglets, divided into two - lower door part covered with plastic curtains to minimize drafts in cold periods (in warm periods the lower door can be opened completely (as additional ventilation) so that the animals do not have to pass through the plastic curtains). The upper part of the door is used e.g. as extra ventilation in hot periods - if both upper and lower doors are opened at the same time, the farmer can use the entrance in a fully upright position; 6) Wall panel with large ventilation flap - opens outwards and can (at a 90-degree angle) be used as a cover/shade for the animals in sunny periods. Design: ©Vanggaard Staldmontage ApS

Further information

Video

Check the following videos for further instructions

- [Presentation of Vanggaard's farrowing hut in Denmark \(4 sows/pigs\), and information about trials in the huts carried out by Aarhus University under the PPILOW project](#)
- [PPILOW workshop on free-range keeping of sows - held in Denmark in April 2024](#)
- [Improving piglet robustness through genetics and farrowing houses](#)

Weblinks

- www.ppilow.eu
- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge platform for more practical recommendations.

About this practice abstract

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