

PIG HOUSING

WHAT are the different types of housing for pigs?

Gestation stalls are single animal pens used to separate and feed pregnant pigs.

Mother pigs (**sows**) give birth in **farrowing crates** where they stay with their piglets until they are weaned.

Market hogs (raised for food) are always kept in **group pens**.

Pigs raised in Canada are housed according to the National Farm Animal Care Council's **Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs**.¹

WHY DO FARMERS USE INDIVIDUAL STALLS?

Sows live in social hierarchies, which mean that some sows dominate others and can become aggressive. Separating out dominant sows eliminates the chance of other sows being bullied and hurt.

Pigs also compete for food, resulting in less dominant sows not getting enough to eat and more dominant sows eating too much. Individual stalls separate the sows and allow farmers to provide the correct amount of food for each sow.



Farrowing crates provide a protected area for piglets.



FARROWING CRATES:

- Allow the farmer to monitor how much each sow is eating and ensure proper nutrition while the sow is nursing her litter.
- Protect piglets from being injured or crushed by their mother. (Sometimes sows accidentally lay on piglets.)
- Minimize the occurrence of *savaging* (when a sow attacks or kills piglets).

Farrowing crates are metal frames designed with enough space for the animal to comfortably lie down and stand up. Each farrowing crate contains a heated area for piglets and a cooler area for the sow. The crate's slotted flooring allows waste to pass through, keeping the sow and piglets dry and comfortable, and reducing the spread of disease.



A sow can weigh 180-300 kg; a piglet weighs only 1 kg!



WHAT is animal welfare?

Animal welfare is the humane treatment of animals. This includes the health and mental well-being of animals in our care.

Farmers and ranchers are responsible for considering all aspects of their animals' well-being. These considerations include proper housing, management, nutrition, disease prevention and veterinary treatment, behavioural and social requirements, and humane handling.

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RAISING ANIMALS IS A BALANCING ACT.

Farmers realize that it's important for pigs to be in an environment where they can behave in natural ways. However, they also understand that the social stress of keeping them in groups can cause injuries to pigs. On-going research into pig housing will continue to guide farmers as they raise their animals by balancing natural behaviour with animal welfare.

Farmers recognize that a contented animal is a productive animal. They know that by taking care of their pigs, these animals will be healthier and produce better quality meat.

CONCERNS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL STALLS

Being herd animals, pigs prefer to live in groups with other pigs.² Sows prefer to socialize with a group of other sows if they feel safe. As well, individual stalls restrict a sow's ability to move around and explore her surroundings.

For years, scientists, researchers and farmers have been studying how to provide housing that balances a sow's need for social interaction with the natural dominant and aggressive behaviour that sows can exhibit.

WHAT ARE FARMERS DOING TO ENSURE THE BEST CARE IS PROVIDED FOR THEIR PIGS?

Pig farmers in Canada have committed to moving away from the use of individual gestation stalls. All new or rebuilt barns must now include group gestation housing. Individual stalls can be used for only a limited time per day during a sow's pregnancy, not for the entire gestation period. Otherwise, pregnant pigs must be housed in groups.³

Farrowing crates serve a distinct purpose: protecting piglets. Farmers will continue to use them until researchers discover better ways to accommodate both the social interaction needs of pigs and the safety needs of piglets.

