



Snout & About

Issue 2

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Breeding Cycles

In the wild, pigs or wild boar, live in a woodland environment and are seasonal breeders. Sows live in groups of 6 sows and respective offspring. Boars would live alone and visit the sow groups once a year in spring to mate. Woodlands have low light levels and pigs themselves have very poor eye sight and do most things by smell and touch with their snout.



Pigs can suffer with a few reproductive syndromes based on their environment. If you can avoid these you have the best chance of getting a sow in pig.

What are these syndromes?

- **Autumn Infertility** - As daylight levels drop and daytime and night time temperatures are in their biggest flux pig's fertility drops.

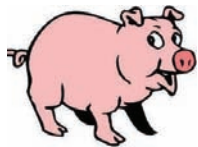
Light is very important in the pigs reproduction cycle. The light goes into the eyes and triggers a reaction in the brain that communicates to the reproductive system to start the breeding cycle and pigs come into heat. This is why in intensive pig production system in Europe pigs are housed indoor under huge strip lights on timers "trick" the pigs to breed all year round.

- **Second Litter drop** - It can be more difficult to breed from pigs after they have weaned their first litter. This relates to getting the body weight and age right for the first pregnancy and raising the litter. If this is not optimal then the body weight and condition reduce and she will not be fit for breeding the second time round.

Therefore the best options for breeding are:



In Summer



In good condition



Out of extreme temperature fluctuations

Keeping Runts Alive

There are a few methods to keep smaller piglets alive that you could try.



So what is runt?

Usually pigs born below 700g are at great risk of not surviving. Pigs born at 1.5kg's or more are twice as likely to survive until weaning. However you can be small and perfectly formed, so although weight is an indicator, weakness and oxygen starvation can mean piglets will need extra attention.

Like any newborn animal, warmth and feed are critical. Piglets like to be very warm, about 26 to 28 degrees C. This can be achieved with a warming lamp or a box by a heat source such as a peat burner or radiator. The bedding must be dry and draft free.

Milk replacer or cows milk can be fed to piglets. Very weak piglets can be fed **flat** coke or warm sugary water as an energy boost, once a day for 3 days. They can drink this from a shallow dish. If runts recover it is advisable to also give them a bit of yoghurt to help their gut linings recover so they can digest more efficiently.

When is it time to give up.

Use your little finger to check the suckling reflex, by placing it in the piglets mouth like a teat. If you feel no sucking the piglet may have lost this function. If the piglets are crying or gasping in pain especially when moved, it is likely they have been laid on by mum and have injuries. In both these cases the piglet should be euthanised with a blunt trauma to the head. Speak to the vet service if you need any further advice on euthanasia.