Safe Pig Handling

Group Sow Housing

Step 1 Put on your personal protective equipment (PPE).

- **Recommended PPE:**
  - Steel toe boots
  - Earplugs

- **Suggested PPE:**
  - Bump caps
  - Dust masks
  - Knee pads
  - Safety glasses
Step 2  Recognize normal sow behavior.

- Eating
- Drinking
- Sleeping
- Occasional fighting, especially after weaning
  - Always carry a sort board to separate aggressive sows.
  - If you cannot safely separate the sows, back away and let them fight it out.
Step 3  Calmly and quietly interact with sows regularly.

- Walk calmly through the sows to observe or chore.
- Respect the flight zones of individual sows as well as the flight zone of the herd.
- Use minimal noise and only when necessary.
- Communicate your presence with gentle touch.
- Bend the knees to squat, don’t bend at the waist.
Observe freshly weaned sows regularly and monitor for fighting.

- Use a sort board.
- Have an escape route.
- If sows are fighting, it might be possible to separate them if aggressive intention has just started.
  - If necessary, let them fight it out to stay safe.
Step 5 Identify and treat sick sows.

- Do a head to tail observation of every sow and look for clinical signs that are abnormal.
  - Lethargic
  - Feverish
  - Thin
  - Lame
  - Off-feed
  - Other

- Avoid slip and trip hazards.
  - Bodily fluids
  - Feces
  - Damaged flooring

- Handle needles safely between use.
  - Never carry uncapped needles in your pocket.
  - Always use pliers to recap needles.
  - Always dispose of used, bent, burred, or dirty needles in designated sharps containers.
Step 6: Follow your farm’s protocol for the timing of pregnancy confirmation.

- Ultrasound according to your farm’s protocol.
- Conduct weekly walk-throughs to visually confirm pregnancy in sows 60+ days pregnant.
- Do not perform ultrasounds if a boar is in the pen and you are alone.
- Remain aware of the behavior of other females in the pen.
Step 7  Sort sows out when needed for special treatment or movement.

- Prepare the path of movement before sorting.
- Enter the pen with a coworker, each with a sort board.
- Keep a slight bend to the knees while in the pen.
- Use the sort board to separate the sow and encourage forward movement to her destination.
Step 8  Tag gilts prior to entry to a group according to your farm’s protocol.

- The center of the ear is the correct placement for the tag.
  - Improper placement increases the risk of the tag being pulled out,

- If using a snare
  - Snare behind the canines.
  - Release the snare careful to prevent injury.