

# Standard Operating Procedure for Animal Handling of Breeding Stock & Piglets

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## Introduction

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On farms with breeding stock and piglets, there must be established protocols for handling boars, moving sows in and out of stalls/pens, for piglets (including weaning and load-out), and for receiving new pigs to the farm. All pigs and piglets should be handled appropriately for their age. Pigs and piglets should be moved at their normal walking pace and aggressive handling must be avoided as it can lead to stressed pigs or injured pigs and/or handlers. Handling pigs of all sizes requires attention to the farm's biosecurity protocols at all times.

## Safety

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### Hazards:

- **For all size of pigs:**
  - Lifting
  - Struck by or against object
  - Animal bite
  - Fall (slips and trips)
  - Pinch points
  - Debris in eyes
  - Dust (respiratory)
  - Noise (hearing)
- **For pigs over 40 pounds:**
  - Stepped on by animal
  - Struck by animal
  - Animal contact injury (such as "tusking" by a boar)
  - Caught between gates

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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Personal protective equipment (PPE) to be used may include:

- Protective eyewear
- Dust mask
- Safety-toe boots
- Hearing protection
- Exam gloves

## Supplies

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Supplies needed for animal handling may include:

- Shaker
- Sorting panel
- Chalk/ paint
- Electric prod
- Cart
- Gates

## Procedures - Preparing for Animal Handling Activities

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### **Preparing for animal handling activities:**

Before moving breeding stock into any stalls or pens, check that the stalls or pens are set-up properly, and are appropriate size for the animal/stage of production. Ensure water and feed is available per the farm's protocol. Ensure that temperature and ventilation settings are properly adjusted prior to moving any animal into the room. When weaning piglets, ensure the transport vehicle is properly set-up to receive weaned pigs.

Perform the following additional steps before beginning animal handling activities:

- Clear all objects from alleys and hallways.
- Inspect alleys and hallways for distractions such as changes in light, drafts, or shadows. Remove any distractions if possible.
- Gather all handling equipment
- Inspect handling equipment for safety concerns for pigs and caretakers

## Procedures - Handling Sows and Boars

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### **Handling sows or boars:**

Groups of breeding stock should be small enough so that the handler can maintain control of all pigs in the group and so that all handling interventions can be applied to the pigs not moving. Depending on size, temperament, and safety concerns, move sows, gilts, or boars in groups of 1-5 pigs at a time.

To aid movement of breeding stock, handlers should give them space, move them in groups when possible, and minimize contact, noise, people, and other activity.

Boars with tusks present a unique safety challenge, therefore handlers must never turn their back to a boar.

When moving a single sow/gilt into a stall, it may improve ease of movement if handlers work in pairs and one opens the front of the stall. This will remove the distraction for the sow/gilt that her path appears blocked.

Electric prods must not be used to move breeding stock out of pens.

## Procedures - Handling Piglets

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**Handling piglets:**

Piglets can be moved in either groups or by picking them up and carrying them. Piglets may be picked up and placed in a cart for movement. When moving piglets by hand, they should be picked up by holding under the rib cage, over the back, or by grabbing a rear leg, above the hock, and then gently setting piglets into a cart, alleyway, or pen. Before releasing a piglet to the ground, the piglet should have two points of contact (i.e. both front legs) with the surface before the handler lets go. When moving piglets in groups, the group should be large enough to be efficient for the facility, but small enough to be safe for the pigs and handlers. Depending on facility design, temperament, and safety concerns, move piglets in groups of 20 pigs at a time.

Piglets must not be tossed, thrown or picked up by the ears or tail.

Electric prods must not be used on sucking or weaned piglets.

**Resources Referenced**

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Feed and Water (SOP)

Safe Pig Handling Training

PQA/TQA Handling Chapters