

Welfare of pigs (SMR 12)

Date published: 1 January, 2015

The aim of these rules is to protect pigs by setting minimum standards for their care and management and welfare. These rules apply as well as the rules for the welfare of farmed animals (SMR 13).

For all pigs*:

You must:

Accommodation and buildings

1. make sure that each of your pigs is free to turn around without difficulty at all times, including while tethered (where this is allowed)
2. make sure that the accommodation for your pigs allows them to:
 - stand up, lie down and rest without difficulty
 - have a clean, comfortable and adequately drained place in which to rest (including making sure that any bedding is clean, dry and not harmful to the pigs)
 - see other pigs (unless the pig is isolated for veterinary reasons or for farrowing)
 - maintain a comfortable temperature
 - have enough space to allow all of them to lie down at the same time
3. make sure that individual stalls or pens satisfy the minimum size rules (see table 1.0 – these do not apply in certain excepted situations)
4. provide artificial lighting of at least 40 lux for at least eight hours each day, for pigs kept in an artificially lit building
5. provide flooring, for those pigs kept in building, that is:
 - smooth but not slippery
 - suitable for the size and weight of the pigs
 - rigid, even and stable, if there is no litter
 - designed, constructed and maintained so there is no injury or suffering to the pigs standing or lying on it
6. provide flooring of the correct measurements (for openings and slats) if you use concrete slatted floors (see table 1.1 below – this applies for all pigs in groups)

Feed, water and environmental enrichment

7. make sure that when feeding group-housed pigs each pig either:
 - has access to feed at the same time as the others in the feeding group
 - has continuous access to feed
 - is fed by an automatic feeding system
8. give all pigs above two weeks old permanent access to a sufficient supply of fresh drinking water
9. give permanent access to enough manipulate material which allows proper investigation and manipulation, for example, straw, hay, wood, sawdust, mushroom compost, peat or a mixture of such, which does not upset the health of your animals

Prevention of fighting

10. take measures to prevent fighting which goes beyond normal behaviour. If you keep pigs together, keep those pigs separate which show persistent aggression or are victims of that aggression

You must not:

Accommodation and buildings

1. keep pigs in high temperature / high humidity environment known as the 'sweat-box system'

2. expose your pigs to constant or sudden noise, or levels above 85 decibels in any building where you keep pigs

Tethering

3. tether pigs at any time

- you will not break the rule relating to the tethering of pigs if it is done for veterinary purposes. In these cases any tether must be regularly inspected and adjusted to make sure that it does not cause pain or injury to the pig. And allows the pig to lie down, rest, stand up and groom itself

(1.0) Minimum size rules for stalls and pens

Pens	Guidance
Size of individual stall or pen	<p>Inside area: must be at least equal to the square of the length of the pig</p> <p>Sides: no side must be less than 75 per cent of the length of the pig</p> <p>The length of the pig is measured from the tip of its snout to the base of its tail when standing with its back straight</p>
Exceptions to minimum size requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a female pig for the period between seven days before the predicted day of her farrowing and the day on which her piglets are weaned (including any piglets fostered by her) • keeping a pig in a stall or pen for veterinary purposes • keeping a pig in a stall or pen for the purposes of servicing, artificial insemination or collecting semen • keeping a pig in a stall or pen while it is fed • keeping a pig in a stall or pen for the purposes of marking, washing or weighing it • keeping a pig in a stall or pen while its accommodation is being cleaned • keeping a pig in a stall or pen while it is waiting to be loaded for transportation <p>However, the period during which you keep the pig must not be longer than needed for that purpose</p> <p>The requirements for a minimum size of stall or pen also do not apply if it is referring to a stall or pen that the pig can enter or leave when it wants</p> <p>In this case the stall must be entered from another stall or pen where the pig is normally kept and which does comply by the minimum standards</p>

(1.1) Measurements of concrete slatted floors when keeping pigs in groups:

Type	Definition	Maximum width of openings (directive requirement)	Tolerance*	Acceptable maximum gap width	Minimum width of slats
Piglet	Pig from birth to weaning	11mm	No tolerance	11mm	50mm
Weaner	Pig from weaning to the age of 10 weeks	14mm	10-14mm +/-2mm	16mm	50mm
Rearer	Pig from the age of 10 weeks to slaughter or service	18mm	14-18mm +/- 3mm	21mm	80mm
Gilt	Female pig between service and first farrowing	20mm	14-20mm +/- 3mm	23mm	80mm
Sow	Female pig after the first farrowing	20mm	14-20mm +/- 3mm	23mm	80mm

Boar	Male pig after puberty, intended for breeding	20mm	14-20mm +/- 3mm	23mm	80mm
------	---	------	--------------------	------	------

*European Commission guidance (2012) indicates that, due to agreed European manufacturing tolerances in precast concrete, for weaner pigs to adults a +2mm or +3mm gap tolerance should be allowed depending on type of pig. Note, that there is no tolerance for gaps for piglets or for slat width which must achieve the minimum.

For all boars*:

You must:

1. place and build boar pens to allow the boars to turn around and hear, see and smell other pigs
2. provide clean resting areas in the boar pens and make sure that the lying area is dry and comfortable
3. make sure that each boar has its minimum allowance of unobstructed floor space:
 - each adult boar must have at least six square metres of unobstructed floor space
 - if used for natural service the floor area must be at least 10 square metres and free of obstacles

For all sows* and gilts*:

You must:

Prevention of parasites

1. treat pregnant sows and gilts against internal and external parasites, if necessary

Farrowing

2. thoroughly clean pregnant sows and gilts before they are placed in farrowing crate
3. give sows and gilts enough suitable nesting material in the week before the expected farrowing time (unless it is not technically practical because of the slurry system you use)
4. provide an unobstructed area behind the sow or gilt during farrowing
5. provide some method of protecting the piglets, such as farrowing rails, if you keep sows loose in farrowing pens

Group housing

6. keep sows and gilts in groups (except during the period between seven days before the predicted day of farrowing and the day on which the weaning of piglets is complete)
7. make sure that each female pig after service, when kept in groups, has its minimum allowance (see table 1.2) of unobstructed floor space, continuous solid floor and pens of correct dimensions
8. feed sows and gilts using a system that makes sure each pig can get enough food even when other pigs are competing for food
9. give all dry pregnant sows and gilts enough bulky or high-fibre food, as well as high-energy food, to satisfy their hunger and need to chew

You will not break the rule relating to keeping sows and gilts in groups if they are kept on holdings of fewer than 10 sows, provided that the individual accommodation keeps to the general rules for pig accommodation.

(1.2) Minimum allowance for unobstructed floor space

Requirement	Guidance
Pen size for sows and gilts kept in groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sides of the pens must be greater than 2.8 metres in length when there are six in the group • the sides of the pens must be at least 2.4 metres in length when there are fewer than six in the group
Flooring for sows and gilts	Amount of unobstructed floor space must be at least:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.64 square metres for each gilt • 2.25 square metres for each sow <p>If the animals are kept in groups of fewer than six the unobstructed floor area must be increased by 10%</p> <p>If the animals are kept in groups of 40 or more the unobstructed floor area can be reduced by 10%</p>
Part of the floor area must be continuous solid floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 0.95 square metres for each gilt • at least 1.3 square metres for each sow <p>Up to 15 per cent of the solid floor area may be reserved for drainage openings</p>

For all piglets*:**You must:**

1. provide piglets with a source of heat and a dry comfortable lying area away from the sow where all of them can rest at the same time
2. make sure that a part of the total floor where you keep the piglets is large enough to allow the animals to rest together at the same time and is solid, covered with a mat or littered with straw or any other suitable material
3. give the piglets enough space to be able to suckled without difficulty if you use a farrowing crate

You must not:

1. wean piglets from the sow at an age of less than 28 days (unless there is a risk of adverse welfare or health of the dam or piglets)

You will not break the rule relating to the weaning of piglets if they are weaned up to seven days earlier, provided that you move them into specialised housing which you empty and thoroughly clean and disinfect before you introduce a new group and which is separate from the housing where you keep sows.

For weaners and rearing pigs**You must:**

1. make sure that each weaner or rearing pig, when kept in groups, has its minimum allowance of unobstructed floor space (see table 1.3)
2. place pigs in groups as soon as possible after weaning and keep these groups stable with as little mixing as possible
3. provide opportunities for the animals to escape and hide from unfamiliar pigs if mixing is necessary. This must also be done at a young age as possible, preferably before, or up to one week after, weaning

You must not:

1. use tranquilising medication to help with mixing, unless there are exceptional circumstances and is on the advice of a vet

(1.3) Amount of unobstructed floor space for weaners / rearers

Average weight of pigs in the group (kilograms)	Minimum unobstructed floor space (square metres)
10 or less	0.15
Greater than 10 but less than or equal to 20	0.20
Greater than 20 but less than or equal to 30	0.30
Greater than 30 but less than or equal to 50	0.40
Greater than 50 but less than or equal to 85	0.55
Greater than 85 but less than or equal to 110	0.65
Greater than 110	1.00



Explanation of terms

'Pig' means an animal of the porcine species of any age, kept for breeding or fattening.

'Boar' means a male pig after puberty, intended for breeding.

'Sow' means a female pig after the first farrowing.

'Gilt' means a female pig intended for breeding, after puberty and before farrowing.

'Piglet' means a pig from birth to weaning.

'Weaner' means a pig from weaning to the age of 10 weeks.

'Rearing pig' means a pig from the age of 10.

[Download guidance](#)

Click 'Download this page' to create a printable version of this guidance you can save or print out.