



PIG TALES



John Mackinnon



Adrian Cox



Jennie Sykes



Julia James



Liz Windsor

Acclimatising New Breeding Boars

Written by John Mackinnon

- Remember first that breeding boars are genetically advanced - they have less fat cover and they grow faster than other animals. Because of less fat cover, the new boars must be protected from environmental and climatic stresses by appropriate housing, bedding, shade in summer, etc.
- Because boars selected for breeding show rapid growth characteristics, it is important that their age is known and that they are not over-worked too soon. Breeding companies should provide the ages of all boars supplied.
- Boars should have been reared in contact with other boars because those reared in total isolation will show lower tendency to mate with females.
- Boars should also have been reared in some proximity to females because they will then develop a greater interest in mating than if they have been reared in isolation.
- Single boars may react to being separated from the animals with which they were reared. If they are upset by separation, a supply of exactly the same food that they received on the source farm is to be advised for a few days and some companionship should be provided through a barred gate.
- New boars should ideally be housed in quarantine for 4 - 6 weeks. If companionship is required for single boars in quarantine, slaughter pigs are ideal since they can be transferred directly to slaughter at the end of the quarantine period. The process of "bugging up" is controversial and should actually be avoided in some circumstances but, as a general comment, slaughter pigs will help to stimulate immunity in the incoming boars by cross-infection through the bars of the dividing gate.
- On arrival and when transferred to the main herd, boars should be housed in clean accommodation that does not smell of other boars (to reduce intimidation). Solid partitions or double fence lines should separate them from mature boars (also to reduce intimidation) and there should be good vision and smell of gilts and sows.
- Boars respond well to a regular routine. New boars should be handled as frequently as possible to build a rapport with the stockpersons on the farm and once out of quarantine they should be included in the routine as soon as possible - feeding, etc.
- The first full services should not be attempted until the boar is 8 months or older. Prior to this time, new boars can run with in-pig gilts. They can be allowed to serve returns, but should not necessarily be relied upon to be fully fertile.



- At 8 months of age, first services should take place in familiar surroundings, perhaps in the boar's own pen or paddock. It is best to use young sows in strong standing oestrus, matched for size, rather than gilts for the first few services.
- Young boars should be treated with patience and they should be helped and encouraged during first services. A reward of food can be given after each mating.
- Early services may not be fully fertile, and thus young boars should be introduced to the mating routine before they are to be relied upon for mainline serving.
- Young boars should be allowed a maximum of two services per week until they are 12 months old.
- Remember that young boars are not particularly effective for detecting or stimulating oestrus in gilts. Mature boars are better at this.
- Once new boars have reached 12 months of age, they may mate up to 3 sows per week but if possible a 24-hour rest period should be allowed between services. Charts for recording boar work patterns should be kept to alert stockmen to the potential for overwork.
- In most cases, new boars will require vaccination against erysipelas and porcine parvovirus. Depending on the farm health profile, other vaccinations may be required, and therefore a full vaccination programme should be included in the farm Veterinary Health Plan.
- If a new boar shows poor libido and a disinterest in sows or gilts on heat, the supplying breeding company should be informed immediately. Poor libido can be inherited, but it can also be due to intimidation by new surroundings. The following procedures should be tried:
 - Inject 2ml LUTALYSE (a natural prostaglandin).
 - 10-15 minutes later introduce a small, first litter sow in strong standing oestrus to the boar's pen.
 - If he serves satisfactorily, offer him a second sow or leave him to serve the first one again.
 - Feed the boar as a reward, even if he has been fed that day.

