



PIG TALES



ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

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Artificial Insemination (AI) is now used as the primary reproductive process on the majority of our breeding units. When used correctly, AI can benefit the unit through improved genetic material, increased profitability and can reduce the health risk on farm. However, when used incorrectly, the effects can be very damaging. The following gives a few basic guidelines to remember if using AI on your unit.

Top Ten Tips for Delivery and On Farm Storage

1. Make sure delivery is into an insulated container, away from the main farm unit and is out of direct sunlight (especially in summer).
2. Collect semen immediately after delivery.
3. Store in a temperature controlled box (e.g. Rotec cabinet).
4. Use a max./min. thermometer to record daily temperature fluctuations and reset after use – the semen should be maintained at 17°C (a range of 15-19°C is acceptable).
5. Ensure the box is large enough to allow air to circulate between doses.
6. Lay the semen doses flat to allow maximal contact between the sperm and diluent.
7. Turn / agitate gently twice daily to prevent sperm settling out.
8. Keep track of use by dates and arrange semen so that older doses get used first.
9. Only take out the semen that you will use within one hour (roughly 8 doses per inseminator) to prevent temperature variation.
10. Use an insulated container to transfer semen to the service area and keep it in the box until the point of use.

Top Ten Tips for Heat Detection

1. Allow time for oestrus detection so that the animals true behaviour can be observed.
2. Ideally sows should be checked for heat twice daily with at least 7 hours between checks.
3. Look for signs of coming into heat (this will help predict time of standing heat). These include a swollen red vulva, watery discharge, restlessness, mounting others and whining.
4. Look for signs of standing heat (ovulation occurs two thirds of the way through the standing period). These include a “normal” looking vulva, sticky discharge, upright tail and tail flicking, decreased appetite, pricked ears, trembling, seeking out the boar, standing rigid if mounted and vocalisation.
5. Test sows for a standing reflex by applying pressure to the back and flanks. Do this at the same time as renewed boar presence.
6. Use a keen “chatty” boar for oestrus detection – allow nose to nose contact as it is the pheromones contained in boar saliva that are the most potent means of inducing the standing reflex.



7. Allow boar contact post weaning and remove the boars at the end of day three. Begin oestrus detection on day four post-weaning.
8. Check for returns daily – observe any restless sows riding other sows.
9. Pay particular attention to sows 18-24 days post service for regular returns to oestrus.
10. Keep accurate records – note ear tag, date and time of oestrus plus any other relevant comments.

Top Ten Tips for Insemination Technique

1. Maintain boar contact throughout insemination and for a 10-minute rest period afterwards as uterine contractions will be continuing.
2. Stimulation of the sow during insemination is vital. This should involve firm balloting the abdomen (in front of the stifle), pull upwards on the folds of skin in front of the thighs, pressure on the back end and area surrounding the vulva, firm pressure across the hips and sustained back pressure during the insemination. A recent Dutch trial has shown this to give one extra pig per litter!
3. Pay attention to hygiene of both the service area and the sow. Clean away any dirt from the vulva prior to insemination to prevent uterine infection.
4. Only unsheathe the AI catheter immediately prior to use.
5. Always use a new catheter for each sow and NEVER hold the catheter in your mouth.
6. There are several catheter types on the market. If using a golden pig catheter, insert the catheter gently forwards and upwards at an angle of 45 degrees. When resistance is felt, pull the catheter back to ensure a firm lock is achieved with the cervix.
7. Raise the flat pack above sow level to allow uterine contractions to suck the semen dose in. This should take 2-3 minutes.
8. Leave the catheter in place for 5-10 minutes to continue cervical stimulation and maintain uterine contractions.
9. Record the quality of the service and note the inseminators' initials, the boar used and the date along side sow ear number.
10. Stockpersons involved in AI should be appropriately trained. Sows should only be served if in full standing heat. This will take patience and attention to detail.

Prevalent Piggy Problems This Month:

- ◆ Environmental issues associated with heat stress, ventilation issues etc.
- ◆ Increase in pre-weaning mortality related to overuse of straw.
- ◆ Lower weaning weights / reduced milk ability due to poor mothering during summer.
- ◆ MMA

To Note:

At this time of year we see an increase in the incidence of MMA / farrowing fever. We have been asked to participate in a study to compare the efficacy of two antibiotics to treat this syndrome in the clinical situation. Unfortunately, only sows farrowing indoors can be enrolled. If you are interested in knowing more about this trial, please contact Liz, Jennie or Adrian at the practice

Upcoming Events: IPVS - 17th, 18th & 19th July

