

Transport and Care of Pigs

FACT SHEET – FOR PIGS AT SALEYARDS

AUTHOR: BEN FAHY, AHO

Owning pigs can be a fun and rewarding experience but it also comes with certain responsibilities for the welfare of the pigs. This brochure provides some basic information regarding your obligations towards caring for your pigs as provided in the Code of Accepted Farming Practice for the Welfare of Pigs (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare).

Pigs have 5 basic needs:

- Readily accessible food and water to maintain health and strength
- Freedom of movement to stand, stretch and lie down
- Visual and social contact with other pigs
- Accommodation which provides protection from the weather and that does not cause injury or distress
- Rapid identification and treatment of injury and disease

Transporting Pigs:

Pigs are intelligent, inquisitive animals that should be handled quietly and without rushing by an experienced stock person. Beating or continual prodding of animals is not acceptable.

Key Things to Remember:

- Transporting of pigs should be conducted in a manner that minimises stress, pain and suffering. Stock selected for transport should be fit and healthy, be in good condition and able to stand for extended periods of time.
- Pigs should be handled quietly and patiently, especially in new environments and always with a stock board.
- Pigs showing signs of stress such as sudden lying down, panting, trembling and with a splotchy skin appearance should be allowed to rest and relax before being transported or moved.
- Pigs are unable to sweat to regulate their body temperature so travelling during hot and humid conditions can be dangerous to the health of the pig.
- Transport should occur early in the morning or late in the afternoon and stocking densities should be lowered by 10% if the temperature is above 25°C.
- Vehicles used for transport of pigs must be constructed from materials that allow thorough cleaning.
- Floors should be of a non-slip surface that does not injure hooves or legs. Pigs have very sensitive skin so transport vehicles must be covered.



Speak with your local stock agent if you need to organise transport for your pigs

Caring for your Pig

Handling and Housing

Pigs going into a new environment will be cautious and unsure. Handle them in a quiet, calming manner, allowing them to investigate their surrounds.

Keep an eye on the pigs for the first 24 hrs – 48 hrs to see that they are settling into their new home and are able to find their water and feed.

Housing for pigs should be designed so that it is easily cleaned, is dry and protects pigs from adverse weather, injuries or other harm. Pigs are susceptible to both heat and cold stress and so housing should aim to provide a constant temperature all year round.

In extremely hot weather some form of cooling should be provided, such as fine mists, fans or an area of cool damp ground. Access to ground outside a pond or mud sty will help. In cold weather the provision of straw bedding, blankets or even heaters will allow the pigs to stay warm.

Pigs are very clean and given the opportunity will defecate away from their sleeping and eating area and will continually go back to the same place. Pig manure can be composted or buried.

Water

Drinking water or another wholesome liquid must be easily available to pigs to meet their physiological needs.

The delivery or flow rate of water should be able to cope with the requirements of different classes of pigs. Different classes of pigs will drink different amounts of water (see Table 1.)

Water provided should be fresh, palatable and cool.

Water can be supplied through nipple or bowl drinkers. It is not recommended that large free standing water containers be used as they can be spoiled and spilled easily. Water availability should be checked at least daily and more often in hot weather.

Table 1. Water requirements per pig

	Average water consumption (litres per day)
Boar or dry sow	12 - 15
Sow and litter	25 - 45
Grower pig	
25 kg	3 - 5
45 kg	5 - 7
65 kg	7 - 9
90 kg	9 - 12

Swill feeding

It is illegal to feed food or food scraps, containing or contaminated by, animal matter to pigs. Swill feeding is illegal due to the high risk of introducing exotic disease such as Foot and Mouth disease and Swine Vesicular disease into Australia.

The cost of an exotic disease outbreak to the Australian economy and farming community would be measured in the billions of dollars. For more information please refer to Agnotes: [Biosecurity Guidelines for Pig Producers](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming) (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming), then click on 'Animals & Livestock' and then 'Pigs'.

If caught feeding swill to pigs, you may face prosecution.

Feed

Pigs are omnivores and only have one stomach. They will eat anything, however to keep them in good health and provide them with the required energy and nutrients, commercially produced pellets are the best option.

Creep feed is designed for piglets and weaners and other commercial foods can be obtained for growers, finishers and sows.

Alternatively, you can feed them certain grains such as wheat, barley or oats, and fruit and vegetables such as apples, tomatoes, carrots, potatoes etc.

Pigs should be feed at least once a day, with lactating sows, piglets and weaners more often.

The nutritional requirements of pigs are dependent on age and reproductive status. For a more detailed analysis of requirements please contact your private practitioner or local animal health representative.

Assessment of health of the pigs:

It is essential that owners of pigs are able to pick the early signs of distress or disease.

Signs of ill health may include separation from other pigs, reduction in appetite, changes in urine or faeces, vomiting, skin discolouration, shivering, sneezing, coughing, lameness and unusual sores.

Sick and injured pigs should be treated immediately and isolated if needed.

If the person responsible is not able to treat the pig or identify what is wrong with it they should seek advice from experts such as specialist pig veterinarians or other qualified advisers in private practice or Department of Primary Industries.

Identification and record keeping

All owners of pigs should contact the Department of Primary Industries and apply for a pig tattoo. Each property is assigned a tattoo, which enables pigs to be identified from their property of origin. Pigs under 25 kilograms must be identified with an ear tag as they are too small to tattoo. If the pigs you purchased were less than 25 kilograms you must tattoo your pig before it leaves your property.

It is important to keep records of the person from whom you purchased the pig, as well as date of purchase.

Accurate records should be kept on the case history and treatment of any diseased or injured pig. For this reason accurate identification of animals is essential.

You should ask for a copy of the PigPass vendor declaration, supplied with the pigs, when you purchase them. When selling your pig, it should be accompanied with a PigPass vendor declaration as well. These are available from Australian Pork Limited website at www.apl.au.com.

