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Cross compliance: welfare standards pigs (SMR 12) (2025)

Summary of welfare rules specific to pigs.

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Introduction

The aim of these requirements is to protect the welfare of pigs by setting minimum standards for their care and husbandry. These rules apply to all pig keepers, in addition to the requirements for the welfare of all farmed animals (SMR 13).

Main requirements

- sows and gilts should be kept in groups
- on holdings with fewer than 10 sows, sows and gilts may be kept individually as long as their accommodation complies with the requirements (see 'Accommodation')
- sows can be kept individually from 7 days before farrowing and until the piglets have been completely weaned

Minimum standards are required for pigs confined for rearing and fattening. These requirements are:

- a pig must be free to turn around without difficulty at all times
- pigs can only be tethered if undergoing examination, test, treatment or operations carried out for veterinary purposes
- tethers have to meet the following requirements:
 - they should not cause injury to the pigs and shall be inspected regularly and adjusted as necessary to ensure a comfortable fit

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- each tether shall be of sufficient length to allow the pig to move about, rest and groom itself and the design shall be such to avoid the risk of strangulation, pain or injury

Where a farrowing crate system is used, piglets must be provided with a source of heat and a solid, dry and comfortable lying area away from the sow where all of them can rest at the same time.

A part of the floor area where the piglets are kept and which is large enough to allow the animals to rest together at the same time must be solid or covered with a mat, or be littered with straw or other suitable material.

Good practice

Tail-docking

Routine tail docking is not permitted. Tail-docking may only be carried out where measures to improve environmental conditions or management systems have first been taken to prevent tail-biting, but there is still evidence to show that injury to pigs' tails by biting has occurred.

Accommodation

- this must be constructed in such a way to allow each pig to:
 - stand up, lie down and rest without difficulty

- have a clean, comfortable and adequately drained place in which it can rest
- see other pigs, unless the pig is isolated for veterinary reasons or in the week before the expected farrowing time and during farrowing, when sows and gilts may be kept out of sight of other pigs
- maintain a comfortable temperature
- have enough space to allow all the animals to lie down at the same time
- have permanent access to enough manipulable material which allows proper investigation and manipulation activities
- have continuous access to a sufficient quantity of fresh drinking water when over two weeks of age.
- the dimensions of any stall or pen used for holding individual pigs must be such that the internal area is not less than the square of the length of the pig, and no internal side is less than 75% of the length of the pig, the length of the pig in each case being measured from the tip of its snout to the base of its tail while it is standing with its back straight
- the above paragraph does not apply to a female pig for the period seven days before the predicted day of farrowing and ending when the weaning of her piglets (including any piglets fostered by her) is complete

Further information on pig accommodation is available in the [Pig welfare: code of practice](https://www.gov.wales/pig-welfare-code-practice) (<https://www.gov.wales/pig-welfare-code-practice>).

Field checks

- check accommodation meets the requirements set out in the code of

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practice

- check that the farmer or keeper has a copy or access to a copy of the code of practice

Further information

For further information please contact:

- Animal and Plant Health Agency

or see **Cross compliance: useful contacts (2025)** (<https://www.gov.wales/cross-compliance-useful-contacts-2025>) factsheet.

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