

Produce Good Litters.

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THE ice gets thin when an attempt is made to tell the other fellow his business, and since the production of good litters is chiefly a matter of common-sense this article might seem rather unnecessary. It is mostly a repetition of what every sound producer now does, but there are always those who are making a start and a perusal of the following will at least provide them with something to discuss, refute, or try out, depending on their viewpoint.

On the whole the production of litters is on a fairly high level in New Zealand not so much because of the number of pigs reared per litter, but because of the high weaning - weights achieved. The 40 lb. weaner has been an ideal now for nearly ten years, and the average weaning-weight of 34 lb. to 35 lb. per piglet at eight weeks now attained is an improvement on the 26 lb. to 28 lb. of some years ago. There is, however, the same kind of loss from birth to three weeks, 20 per cent. to 30 per cent., in New Zealand as in every other country. This occurs, as a rule, during the first three days. Its elimination would enhance the profits of pig-keeping enormously. There is a further loss due to the low numbers of pigs sold per sow, due to having only one litter and to winter deaths. In 1927 there were only slightly more than five pigs slaughtered for every sow kept. In 1936 there were over nine being slaughtered. When twelve per sow can be slaughtered, the average attained in the Old Country will have been reached, and when fifteen per sow are slaughtered there will be no further need to talk about ways and means of producing good litters.

Give the Sow a Chance.

The preparations to be made for the production of a good crop of pigs begin with the mating of the sow.

One cannot expect to raise a big litter of pigs from an old or fat sow. How many sows are retained long after their productive value has fallen to zero, after their fifth and sixth litters? Granted there are exceptions, many sows still produce large-sized litters as far as numbers go, but how many of these sows actually rear to a finish the litter they gave birth to? On the other hand, underfed sows cannot produce big, strong, lusty pigs. Starvation is just as harmful as overfeeding. No one except the man on the job can say how much to feed

to a sow. Success lies in keeping an eye on the sow's condition and studying her progress. It is important that the brood sow be in good condition when the breeding or mating season arrives. There are many, of course, who think differently, under the impression that a sow low in condition at the mating-period will yield a larger litter. Flushing of breeding-stock prior to mating is recognized as the first essential in securing good results. This flushing of the sow is performed spontaneously through the reabsorption into her system of her own milk at weaning-time, and because it happens accidentally its value is seldom appreciated by the owner, who starves her or leaves her without water until her milk goes off. Those who have failed to get their sows in pig just after weaning will probably appreciate the importance of flushing, and what a poor fist they have made of it without Nature's assistance.

Comfortable and Clean Pen.

Location of the sty plays an important part in the success or failure of a pig crop. Under all circumstances, adequate and clean housing is essential for the raising and production of good pigs. At least three weeks before farrowing the sow should be brought into the farrowing-pen to allow her the opportunity of becoming acquainted with her surroundings. Most of the dead pigs just after farrowing are because of disturbed sows. They have not settled down in their new surroundings and are irritated by them. The higher the condition of the sow the more easily she is disturbed. Changes from open air to the restriction of a pen; from drinking and eating when she likes to feeding occasionally and irregularly; inability to escape from irritating squeals next door, combined with the adjustments taking place internally, call for especial care on the part of the owner if the sow is going to settle down comfortably. More pigs would be saved by attention to these details than have ever been saved by farrowing-rails.

A wooden overlay on a well-sloped concrete floor ensures a clean house. If pens are in continuous use it pays to sterilize them before each new sow is put in. Three or four buckets of boiling water containing disinfectant scrubbed over the walls and floor reduces the incidence of infection, especially of scour and worms, in the young pigs. Clean troughs and a

wholesome feed-supply is just as important for baby pigs as they are for calves, lambs, foals, or puppies, and pay just as good dividends with pigs as they do for other young stock.

Nurse Sow after Farrowing.

Opinions vary as to the best ration to feed the sow after farrowing. Some give no feed for the first day, providing water only, others continue with the usual ration as given prior to farrowing. Some feed a liberal ration of bran as a slop. Sows will not, as a rule, eat too much bran, and it satisfies their appetites. As a laxative it will rapidly reduce the feverish condition of the sow, as well as reducing the dangers of constipation. Other successful pig-men use molasses regularly with equally good results. Regularity of quantity and quality of feed-supply and times of feeding are most important. The matter of exercise for the sow is also one of importance and should not be overlooked. If good, clean pasture is provided the matter of exercise naturally finds its own solution.

Feeding the Litter.

The value of getting the litter to commence feeding at as early an age as possible is worthy of consideration. They will, as a rule, make a start when about three weeks old. A creep should be constructed in a corner of the pen or run occupied by the sow, to provide the piglets with a high protein-growing ration such as meat-meal in addition to the mother's milk. In this way, ultimately, milk can be fed directly to the young pigs without upsetting their digestion. Crushed or rolled oats at this stage are the best of the cereals. Healthy, robust piglets go for rolled oats with gusto, and they make good use of them.

Castrate Boars at Three Weeks.

Many pigs now rejected on account of faulty castration, scrotal abscess, and peritonitis would pass the Inspector if castration had been carried out when the pigs were younger. Young pigs are usually careful to keep themselves clean. They are not so active and prone to fight as older pigs. Small incisions can be made in the younger pigs. Young pigs are easier to handle than older ones. For these and a number of other reasons the