Troubles in Sows at Parturition

Abortion

When abortion occurs pigs are born prematurely and before they are capable of separate existence. The most common cause is nutritional disorder through deficiencies in the feed supply, sudden changes in diet, or unwholesome feeds. Frights, slips, rough handling, and overcrowding can cause violent contraction of the womb, resulting in abortion. It is suspected, however, that the germ causing contagious abortion is responsible for a certain amount of temporary or permanent sterility in pigs in New Zealand.

By proper care and feeding cases of abortion occurring among sows in New Zealand can be avoided. Retained afterbirth is frequently a complication, and this is explained in a later section of this article. The sow should be allowed a rest after being cleaned up and not put back to the boar until the second or third heat period after treatment.

Milk Fever

If, immediately before or within a day or two after farrowing, sows show symptoms of abnormal excitement or drowsiness, grinding of teeth, or frothing or dribbling that are accompanied by loss of appetite, and unsteady gait, paralysis, and semi-consciousness progressing to complete coma, milk fever should be suspected. It may be distinguished from septic infections after farrowing by the fact that the sow's temperature is normal (102.6 degrees F.) or slightly subnormal.

This disease is caused by a sudden fall in the calcium level in the blood, and this can be corrected by an injection of calcium borogluconate given in the same way as is used in treating milk fever in cows. The injection for a sow consists of ½oz. of calcium borogluconate boiled in 3 fl. oz. of water. After it has been cooled to blood heat it is injected under the loose skin of the neck, elbow, or flank and is massaged into the tissues. Only occasionally is a second injection necessary. Borogluconate may be obtained from any chemist.

Inflation of the udder may be practised if no calcium gluconate is on hand. No teat siphon is required. The teat is placed in the end of the connection. The teats should be carefully cleaned with a mild disinfectant solution before inflating.

Milk fever is rare in sows on dairy farms, but has been seen where sows were heavily fed, such as on properties where swill or garbage is used.

Eversion of the Womb

Symptoms of eversion of the womb are obvious, and immediate action is required if loss of the sow is to be prevented. The everted womb must be caught up in a clean towel previously rung out in a disinfectant solution at correct strength, and the sow must be got into a position where her hindquarters can be elevated by means of ropes on her hind legs preparatory to replacing the womb.

The everted mass must be thoroughly cleaned and any swelling reduced by running cold water over it and gently massaging until the size is reduced so that it can be returned to its proper position. Flood the passage with a warm antiseptic solution and leave the sow with her hindquarters elevated until the discomfort of the operation has subsided. Siphon out the solution, then put two tape stitches across the vulva, or insert two safety-pins to prevent a recurrence when the sow gets on her feet again. Keep the sow's bowels open and avoid bulky feeding for some time.

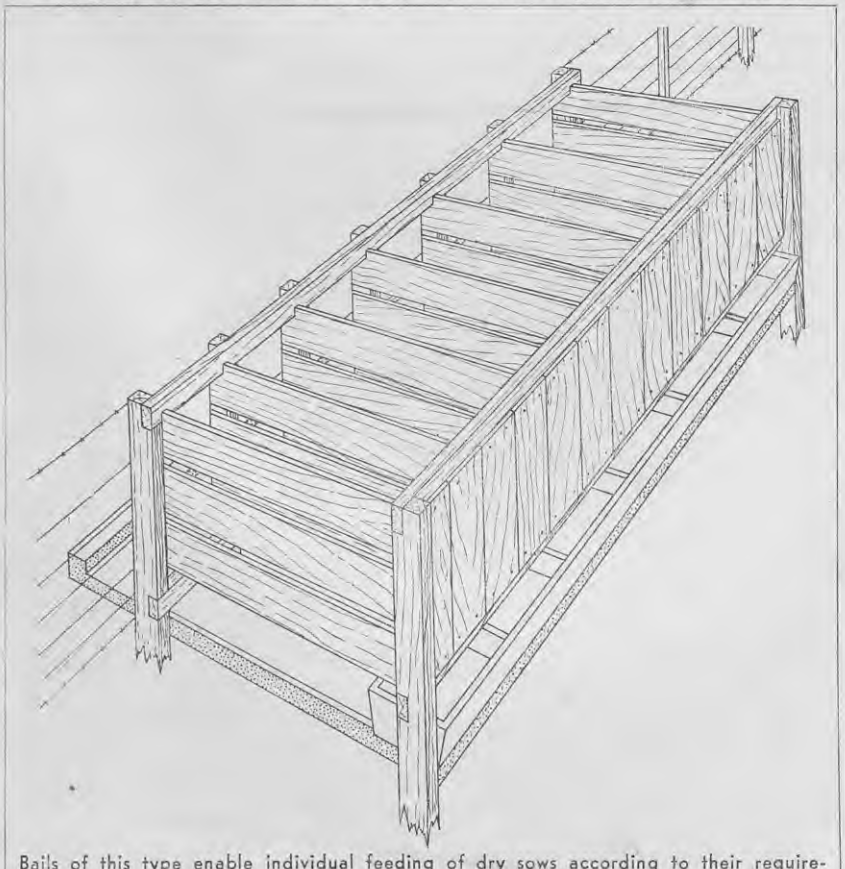
Prevention lies mainly along the lines of avoiding too fat condition in sows at farrowing and ensuring that constipation is never allowed to develop.

Constipation

Sows should have access to grazing, and if at any time before farrowing a tendency to constipation is noted, this should be immediately countered by giving 1 to 3lb. of molasses in the feed as required. If the constipation develops suddenly just before farrowing, a dose of up to ½ pint of liquid medicinal paraffin should be given.

Retention of Afterbirth

If the ration of the in-pig sow has contained grazing or other greenfeed and any cereal meals used have been properly balanced with minerals, the afterbirth should normally come away easily soon after the birth of the last pig. Serious consequences, including temporary or permanent sterility and even blood poisoning and death, may follow unless action is taken to facilitate proper cleansing. Whatever is done, pulling, which will tear the delicate membranes of the womb, must be avoided. A full dose of opening medicine, such as 2 or 3oz. of Epsom-salt, according to the size of the sow, may be given in water or the first light milk feed. A douche with a warm disinfectant solution at correct strength for internal use may be helpful. This must be run in through a funnel and rubber tubing and siphoned off after a few minutes.



Bails of this type enable individual feeding of dry sows according to their requirements, even though they are running out together.

Troubles in Sows after Parturition

Failure of Milk Supply

Failure of the milk supply may be caused by hormone failure. This can be corrected only by injection, and a veterinarian should be consulted for this purpose. Obvious troubles at parturition, as outlined above, may be responsible for delayed lactation or poor milk supply, as may be poor feeding of the sow before farrowing. The way each of these causes may be avoided has been outlined. If none of these is the cause, the inherited milking propensities of the sow are poor and she is not worth persevering with as a breeding animal. In fact, the strain from which she comes, and particularly the sire and dam, should be suspect and only used for future breeding purposes if the general performance level of sows bred is satisfactory.