


Teat lesions



What do teat lesions indicate?

- Piglets establish a teat order;
- Lack of space and large litter sizes in which number of piglets outnumber functional teats prevent piglets from establishing a stable teat order; 
- Teat lesions are the result of teat fighting.

Legal requirements


Council Directive **98/58/EC** states in the Annex "Natural or artificial breeding or breeding procedures which cause or are likely to cause suffering or injury to any of the animals concerned must not be practised. This provision shall not preclude the use of certain procedures likely to cause minimal or momentary suffering or injury, or which might necessitate interventions which would not cause lasting injury, where these are allowed by national provisions." {point 20}

"No animal shall be kept for farming purposes unless it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of its genotype or phenotype, that it can be kept without detrimental effect on its health or welfare." {Annex, point 21}

Council Directive **2008/120/EC** states:

{Annex I, Chapter II, point B4}: "An unobstructed area behind the sow or gilt must be available for the ease of natural or assisted farrowing."

{Annex I, Chapter II, point C2}: "Where a farrowing crate is used, the piglets must have sufficient space to be able to be suckled without difficulty."

{Annex I, Chapter II, point C3}: "No piglets shall be weaned from the sow at less than 28 days of age unless the welfare or health of the dam or the piglet would otherwise be adversely affected. However, piglets may be weaned up to seven days earlier if they are moved into specialised housings which are emptied and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before the introduction of a new group and which are separated from housings where sows are kept, in order to minimise the transmission of diseases to the piglets." 

Note: Listed requirements are not comprehensive. Moreover, there might be stricter national legislation in place.

Inspection method (recommended)

- Farmer records teat lesions of sows during his/her daily inspections;
- Inspector checks veterinary records and sows for teat lesions;
- Inspector reports findings to farmer and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation on farm corrective actions are taken.

Next page: Udder and teats are scored for presence of fresh or healed lesions.

Space to suckle

Poor access to the udder can be assessed by measuring the space to suckle, i.e. the distance from the wall to the inner pipe of the crate, at the front and rear end of the crate. The distance should at least equal the body length of a 4-week-old piglet.

Teat lesions

Randomly select one body side of a sow. Teat lesions score at farm level: percentage of sows scored as 1.

Score 0:

- Max. four fresh or healing (scabs) lesions on the udder,
- teats are intact or fully healed.



Score 1:

- At least five fresh or healing (scabs) lesions of all sizes on the udder, or
- At least one injured or torn teat.



Source scoring protocol: KTBL Leitfaden



European Reference Centre
for Animal Welfare *Pigs*

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factsheet please contact
the Centre