




What do shoulder sores indicate?

- 'Shoulder sores' is the popular term used to describe decubital shoulder ulcers.
- Shoulder sores occur in particular in sows housed in farrowing crates.
- They are caused by pressure inflicted by the flooring and can be observed in the weeks after farrowing.
- The lesions vary from superficial to deep ulcers involving subcutaneous layers or even bone tissue.
- Open shoulder sores are a clinical sign of sows being unfit for transport. 

Legal requirements

Council Regulation (EC) **1/2005**: Requirements associated with wounds:

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 1.}: only fit animals shall be transported.


{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 2.b}: unfit animals present severe open wounds, or prolapse.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 3.a}: no additional suffering for slightly injured or ill animals.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 3.b}: transportation of animals used for scientific purposes.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 3.c}: transportation under veterinary supervision for treatment or diagnosis.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 4.}: separation, veterinary treatment and/or killing of animals falling ill or being injured during transport.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 5.}: use of sedatives. 

Note: Listed requirements are paraphrasing the literal text of the regulation and are not comprehensive. Moreover, there might be stricter national legislation in place. For a more detailed description on the specific requirements, see the review "[Fitness for Transport](#)".

Inspection method (recommended)

- In case the planned journey is less than 8h, farmer and livestock driver have to assess fitness for transport before and during loading.
- In case the journey is more than 8 h, an official inspector has to be present at loading to assess fitness for transport of pigs.
- In either case, pigs will be assessed for **shoulder sores**.
- The inspector reports findings to the farmer and/or livestock driver, and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation during loading and transport corrective actions are taken to ensure the situation complies with legal requirements in the future.



Make sure that all sows to be assessed are standing up. Stand less than 1 meter away from the observed sow. To assess shoulder sores both shoulders should be visually examined.

The assessor must consider the potential of the wounds to cause pain and blood loss during transport and possible aggravation. To make a decision she or he will have to consider:

- Whether the wound is large, extensive or/and severe
- Whether the wounds are multiple
- Whether the wound is healed or not

No risk to welfare

No evidence of a shoulder lesion



Moderate risk to welfare

Evidence of an old injury (scar tissue formed), or recent injury which is healing, or reddening of the area without an open wound



High risk to welfare

An open wound/lesion



Sources for the assessment method: Welfare Quality® Protocol and Practical Guidelines to Assess Fitness for Transport of Pigs



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If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this factsheet please contact info.pigs@eurcaw.eu