

Instructional Scenario

Piglet Processing



Course/Duty Area: Livestock Production Management / Exploring Swine Production

Scenario: Tim is a local swine producer, who is currently in the middle of farrowing his sow herd for the upcoming show season. The sows have successfully delivered their litters, and now Tim must process the newborn piglets to ensure they are healthy, identified, and prepared for their new lives. Piglet processing is a critical step in swine management, especially for show pigs, as it sets the foundation for growth, health, and performance. Tim will need to take the following steps:

- Within the first 24 hours, he will perform the following to ensure the survival of the litter:
 - Each newborn piglet will receive a 1mL intramuscular injection of supplemental iron around day 3 to prevent anemia, as sow milk is iron poor.
 - Each newborn piglet will have their umbilical cord clamped and dipped in iodine to prevent infection and promote healing.
- Tim will need to decide if he will do the following:
 - Inspect each piglet for signs of weakness, deformities, or illness; ensure they have nursed and received colostrum
 - Notch ears using the universal ear notching system or tagging to identify each piglet for record-keeping and show purposes
 - Dock tails to prevent potential biting among siblings
 - Clip needle teeth to prevent injury to sow's udder and littermates
 - Castrate male pigs now or at a later date
- When the pigs reach two weeks of age, Tim will start vaccination protocols as prescribed by the veterinarian against diseases such as erysipelas, Porcine circovirus type 2 (PCV2), Mycoplasma, rotavirus. Additionally, Tim will consult the veterinarian regarding deworming protocols and schedules.

Big Question: What are the best practices for piglet processing for Tim's herd and system?

Focused Questions:

- When should piglet processing take place?
- What are some possible consequences of failure to follow a newborn checklist?

Project-Based Assessment: Students should develop a Best Practices Infographic for piglet processing to include preparation, timing of procedures, piglet handling, animal welfare considerations, processing procedures, and post-processing care. Students could practice ear notching with dried pig ears and practice drawing medications to correct dosages.

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