



ANIMAL WELL-BEING

Pigs

The well-being of animals matters mostly to animals, of course. But this issue is also of vital importance to many consumers — and the swine industry as well. This publication, part of a series, seeks to provide basic information for non-experts.

If you are concerned about an animal's well-being

- Call a local animal control officer
- For livestock and poultry concerns, contact the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH)
<http://www.in.gov/boah/>

What is Animal Well-Being?

Animal well-being, or animal welfare, is the ability of an animal to cope with its environment and living conditions. It's more than simply being healthy. Animal well-being includes:

- An animal's feelings or emotions, such as contentment
- An animal's ability to perform natural behavior, such as grooming or preening, stretching and turning around fully.
- An animal's health and biological functioning, such as not having injuries or disease

Author: Marisa Erasmus
Assistant Professor,
Department of
Animal Sciences,
Purdue University

Did you know that ...

What's in a name? It can get confusing. Opinions abound. Perhaps this will help.

- "Pig" describes all species under the Suidae family, which includes hogs and boars.
- A hog is always a pig, but not all pigs are hogs.
- Sometimes an older and bigger pig is called a hog. Pigs are also called swine.
- You can't go wrong by saying "pig."

Females are called gilts or sows. Gilts are females that have not reproduced. Sows are females that have reproduced.

Male pigs are called boars or barrows. Boars are intact males. Barrows are castrated males.

What's the deal with pigs and mud? Pigs don't have many sweat glands, so they don't sweat much. But they get hot, of course. One available option — roll in the mud. Gotta do what ya gotta do.

A pig's snout gets a lot of use. Rooting is an important behavior. Pushing or nudging with the snout enables the animal to explore its environment – and perhaps unearth food in the process!

Nesting is important to sows. Hours before they farrow (give birth) they will look for nesting material and try to build nests, even if nesting material, such as straw, isn't available.

What pigs want, need, like, etc.

Pigs want constant access to fresh, clean, unfrozen water.

Housing and shelter should have adequate ventilation, dry floors with good traction, and enough space for separate resting and bathroom areas.

When animals are pregnant, producing milk, growing, or stressed by cold, they need more energy and nutrition. Do not give pigs moldy feed.

Move pigs in a calm manner, using wooden or plastic panels called "hog boards."

Check animals at least once a day for diseases, parasites, and injuries. Contact a veterinarian if necessary.

Poor well-being — signs and causes

It's not always obvious when pigs are sick or in pain. These behaviors and signs are worth looking for:

- Inactivity
- Being less social than usual
- Eating and drinking less than usual
- Huddling, shivering, sleeping and resting more than usual
- Dull, dirty skin. Dull eyes.
- Using the same area for resting and defecating/urinating
- Inability to get up from a lying position
- Discharge from the eyes, nose or other areas
- Vomiting
- Injuries or sores anywhere on the body

Watch out for ...

- Housing is often a factor when pigs exhibit counterproductive behaviors.
- Aggression can occur when unfamiliar pigs are mixed and when pigs are housed in groups without access to bedding.
- Tail biting causes pain and can lead to injury and even death. It develops in piglets that are weaned early (before 5 weeks of age), kept in bare environments or in crowded conditions. Tail docking reduces tail biting but does not prevent it.
- Belly nosing is just what it sounds like. Piglets that are weaned early sometimes rub their noses against the bellies of other pigs. Sores and injuries can result.
- When sows are tethered or kept in individual crates or stalls, sows can develop vacuum chewing (chewing without having food in the mouth) or bar biting (biting bars of the stall or crate). When sows are housed in groups with access to bedding, these unwelcome behaviors can be reduced to some extent.