

## H23 - Feeding of piglets



**Feeding of piglets**

**Piglets' need for energy, minerals and vitamins must primarily be covered by the sow's milk.**

1. Get the piglets used to weaning feed from they are minimum 10 days old.
2. Feed piglets 2-5 times a day.
3. Empty and clean their trough minimum once a day.
4. In case of disease, piglets may need water, energy or minerals, and there may be imbalances in the intestinal flora. In such cases, you may have to supply an electrolyte solution or dairy products.

Feed	Pros	Cons	Suitable for
Dry feed (gruel)	Gets the piglets used to weaning feed and trains them in feed intake. Good energy supplement esp. at five weeks' weaning. May help reduce piglets biting the sow's teats. Easy to administer.	Miminal utilisation of the feed until the piglets are 3-4 weeks old.	Piglets from min. 10 days of age for training in feed intake.
Electrolyte	Adds fluid, minerals and energy.	Fairly expensive when purchasing ready-mixed feed.	Piglets suffering from diarrhoea.
Dairy products	Adds lactic acid bacteria and energy.	High risk of poor hygiene. Limited shelf-life.	Underweight piglets and piglets with sick sows



**Unhygienic conditions by the trough**

### **Incorrect feeding**

#### **Dry feed (or gruel dry feed)**

- The trough is dirty / contains wet feed.
- Too few feedings a day.
- Feed wastage.
- The feed is too old.

#### **Dairy products**

- The trough is dirty.
- The milk is not dissolved according to instructions.
- The fluid stands in the trough for more than 6 hours.
- Nipple drinker is not accessible.

### Additional comments - Feeding of piglets

The trough must not block the piglets' access to the nipple drinker.

1. Start teaching the piglets to eat dry feed when they are 10-14 days old by supplying the feed in a trough or on the solid part of the floor. If the farrowing facility has fully slatted floor, place the feed on the heat plate, in the creep area or in a trough. For the first few days, place the feed where the sow can reach a bit of it to increase the piglets' interest in the feed.
2. Feed intake varies greatly from litter to litter; a litter of 24-day-old piglets may eat from 100 g to 1 kg dry feed a day.  
With 2-5 daily feedings it is easy to increase the supply of feed according to the need of the piglets.
  - In the second week, feed the piglets 2 times a day.
  - In the third week, feed the piglets 3 times a day.
  - In the fourth week, feed the piglets 4 times a day.
  - In the fifth week, feed the piglets 5 times a day.Feed the piglets according to appetite from week 3 to reach optimum feed intake.
3. The trough must be clean and empty before feeding. It is important that the trough is emptied at least once a day due to
  - Hygiene
  - Feed loses taste and aroma if it stays in the trough too long.
  - You activate the piglets' curiosity when you pour feed into an empty trough.
4. In case of disease or other problems related to the piglets, you may have to give them an electrolyte solution or dairy products as supplement to the sow's milk. Do not give the piglets any supplements before they are 12 hours old due to their intake of colostrum.  
**Electrolyte is given to piglets suffering from diarrhoea to re-establish the fluid balance.**
  - Make the solution daily. Give max. 1 l per litter twice a day in the first week.
  - Hygiene is crucial, and you must empty and wash the trough before you supply electrolyte.**Dairy products can be used as additional source of nutrition, but cannot replace sow milk.**  
**A38:**
  - A38 can be used as a preventive measure against diarrhoea in individual litters as it introduces lactic acid bacteria.
  - A38 may be suitable for weak litters the first day after farrowing.
  - A38 can also be used for litters that were exchanged or piglets by a sick sow that is undergoing treatment.
  - Hygiene is essential when feeding A38. Empty and wash the trough daily.**Cow colostrum:**
  - **Cannot** replace sow colostrum as it does not contain the right antibodies.
  - Can be used as supplementary energy source **after** intake of sow colostrum.
  - May be a vital energy supply to the piglet and may partially protect the intestinal surface.
  - Can be given in new disposable bottles for AI semen gently in the mouth of the weak piglet.
  - Can be stored in a freezer in the bottles and thawed as needed. Remember, the milk must have body temperature.**Milk replacer:**  
Even though the piglets have received colostrum and get sow milk replacer, they must still be assured of milk from the sow.
  - Hygiene is crucial when using milk replacer. Empty and wash the trough before each feeding, and also wash the equipment for mixing milk replacer after use.
  - Dissolve milk replacer in the correct ratio of water according to instructions. The water must have the right temperature; if it is too cold, the milk replacer will not dissolve. If it is too warm, the proteins will be destroyed.
  - Stir the milk replacer until there are no lumps. Lumps will continue through the stomach to the intestines.
  - The piglets must eat up within a few hours or else the milk replacer will get stale in the trough.