

Hand Rearing a Piglet

This article provides a brief overview of hand raising a baby pig / piglet.

Introduction

First of all it should be noted that raising an orphan pig is difficult and can often be unsuccessful.

One of the key points as to the survival of any piglet is whether or not it has managed to suckle from its mother in the first few hours (24) of life. At this stage the sows milk contains high levels of colostrum which imparts a high degree of protection from invading pathogens to the piglet. Without this protection the piglet is more likely to succumb to illness from invading bacteria and viruses, which without, it is unable to protect itself against.

To raise your pig consider the following points:

1. Keep the piglet warm

New born piglet do not generate their own warmth, thus they must be kept warm. Use a heat pad or heat lamp to achieve this aim. An ideal temperature is 27- 30°C (85 - 90°F). Ensure the floor is dry and the area is free from draughts.

2. Feed the Piglet correctly

Ideally the piglet should be fed a proprietary sows milk replacer. This can be bought from most animal health stores. An alternative is to use a goats (kid) milk replacer. If neither are readily available, use condensed milk watered down 33% with water to start with until you find a milk replacer. Cows milk is not ideal for a new born piglet as it will find it difficult to digest. This can be used after a few days, but is not a good substitute for a properly formulated milk replacer.

If cows milk is all you have try the following recipe (makes enough for several piglets):

600 ml whole milk

1 egg yolk

Quarter teaspoon of citric acid

Half teaspoon cod liver oil

Warm the milk to body temperature for the first few days and feed using a human baby bottle and teat.

After a few days, the piglet should quickly learn to drink from a small bowl, which may be easier. To teach the piglet, at feeding time, place the milk in the bowl and dip the pigs nose into it. After doing this a few times the piglet will get the idea and learn to drink from the feeder.

The piglet will probably need to be fed approximately every 3 - 4 hours for the first several days, then 3 - 4 times a day until weaning.

At birth the piglet will probably drink 2 to 3 tablespoons of milk each feed. This will gradually increase each day as the piglet grows. Introduce the piglet to solid food from 7 - 10 days. A specialist piglet starter creep is ideal.

The piglet can be weaned off the milk at around 5½ - 6 kg (12-14 lbs) in weight, usually this is around 28 days of age.

3. Iron

A piglet is born with a limited supply of iron and it is necessary to supplement this to prevent the piglet getting anaemia. This is done by either injection of Iron Dextran (2cc) or the administration of an iron paste, around 2 or 3 days of age. This can be bought from your local animal health supplier, follow label instructions.

Vaccinations

For recommendations on vaccinations for pet pigs, click the link below:

[Vaccinations for pet pigs](#)

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