

# Farrowing

- A mother pig is known as a **sow**. The **gestation**, or pregnancy, period of a sow is 114 days (3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days).
- An average sow will give birth to a litter containing 8 to 12 piglets, about twice a year. A piglet is a baby pig.
- The word **farrow** means to give birth to piglets. From the time piglets are born, pork producers ensure that they are well cared for. They are housed in special barns, known as **farrowing barns**, with their mothers. Here, they remain in **farrowing stalls**, which are specially-designed pens that allow them to safely rest next to their mothers and drink milk. Heat lamps in the farrowing barn keep the piglets warm.
- In this way, pork producers are able to provide the best care possible for sows and their piglets.
- When piglets are about three to four weeks old, they are weaned. **Weaning** is when the piglets are removed from their mother's milk and moved to another barn where they are housed with other similar-size piglets.
- Here, they are given solid food to eat and they have access to waterers, which enable them to drink as often and as much as they like.
- They will continue to be well cared for and well fed until they reach about 270 pounds, or market weight. This is the weight at which they may be marketed or sold and processed into pork products.



# Vocabulary

**Sow** – full grown female pig that gives birth or farrows piglets

**Piglet** – a newborn/young pig

**Boar** – full grown male pig

**Farrow** – the act of giving birth to baby pigs

**Litter** – group of piglets that a sow gives birth to at one time

**Wean** – when a piglet is removed from its mother's milk and given solid food to eat and water to drink

**Market weight** – weight at which a pig may be marketed or sold and then processed into pork products



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