

Selecting for Reproductive Trait Soundness in Replacement Gilts



A very good underline with eight, well-spaced teats per side. Teat size and texture are excellent.



Note teat development of this pregnant gilt. Teats are well spaced with good size and texture.

Underline Soundness

All candidate replacement gilts must clear one final hurdle before being selected for the breeding herd — successful screening of the mammary system and external female genitalia.

Beginning with the mammary system, teat number, teat placement and teat quality are the primary criteria. Six, evenly spaced, functional teats per side is the minimum requirement. Most producers prefer 14 functional teats.

Teats should start far forward on the abdomen. Teat rows should be relatively close to the midline of the abdomen. Teat rows that are too far apart when the sow lies down to nurse place the top row of teats out of the reach of newborn piglets.

Avoid selecting gilts with blind or inverted teats, pin teats, damaged teats and large, coarse teats whenever possible. Various examples of teat quality traits are shown here.

Screening for vulva size and development is another critical step in gilt selection. Avoid gilts with small, infantile or tipped-up vulvas. Examples of acceptable and unacceptable vulva traits are displayed at the bottom of the poster.



A good underline, however, the space between the third and fourth teats is inadequate for proper mammary gland development.



Poor spacing between the first and second teats, but the other teats are nicely spaced and of good quality.



This very poor underline shows uneven teat size, uneven spacing, poor positioning and poor teat quality. Only two teats appear to be functional.



This short-sided gilt has only five teats and they are coarse. The second teat is a "pin teat," which likely will not become functional. This gilt should be culled.



The second teat on this gilt's underline is an example of a nonfunctional, underdeveloped teat.



This gilt has six, well-spaced teats, however, their prominence is very poor. This gilt should be culled.



This very short-sided gilt has only four teats on each side. She should be culled.

External Genitalia Soundness



This gilt has a well-developed vulva with good size and shape.



This small vulva could be a problem for natural mating and serve as an indicator of an under-developed reproductive tract.



This small, slightly tipped vulva could create problems with natural mating and at farrowing.



This small, tipped vulva may make natural mating more difficult. If gilt is kept, check to ensure the trait is not persistent.



This very small, infantile vulva indicates an underdeveloped reproductive tract. This gilt should be culled.



Bites and other abrasions to the vulva area must be examined closely. Injuries should be healed before mating.



Scarring in the vulva area can create problems at farrowing. Examine injuries closely.