

# KuneKune Pigs- Breeding & Farrowing

BY KATHY PETERSEN OF VIRGINIA KUNEKUNES



I hope that you are enjoying learning more about KuneKune pigs - the friendly, docile, easy going, grazing, and multi-purpose breed of pigs. KuneKune pigs are very unique as they are a smaller pig that is not prone to root or test fencing like the big commercial breeds. Their ease of handling makes them idea for small farms, first time pig owners and experienced pig owners/breeders who want an easier pig to raise.

In this article we are going to talk about breeding, preparing for the piglets and farrowing a litter. KuneKunes are a slower growing pig. Boars (males) can usually reach breeding age around 9-12 months. The gilts (females that have not farrowed a litter before) reach breeding age at 12 + months depending on their size and bloodlines. Usually males and females can be housed together until the gilts begins to cycle around 8-11 months of age. Then moving them apart protects the gilt from getting pregnant until the time you want to breed them and it also helps them “miss” each other for when you do wish to breed them.

Before breeding you want to give the gilt her shots as instructed by the veterinarian of your choice. For this article I will advise you what I do for my breeding program but, please never substitute this over what your vet suggest to you. I use Toxiac AD & E (or Rhini Shield TX4) and deworm with Ivomectin (injectable) at least a week or two before a gilt goes to the boar. I want to access the gilts weight and make sure she is in optimal health. You can also “flush” the gilt before breeding which is “said” to give you more piglets. Flushing is where you increase the gilts food so that her body knows that food is plentiful and therefore, she can sustain the pregnancy.

You want to keep an eye on the gilt for her to cycle and if perhaps you are lucky you will see the breeding. You write this date down as not to forget it and add 116 days for her “due date”. KuneKunes are pregnant for 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days. During this time, you will want to begin the farrowing quarters if you have not already done it.

Moms will need a nice area for farrowing her babies in a draft free environment. If you are farrowing in the winter, you will want to have electricity for heat lamps and a source of heat should you be in an area that needs heat. We use our heat lamps on a thermostat so that the heat lamps kick on and off automatically when the temperature drops below the temperature I set it to. This is very convenient

Property of Virginia KuneKunes, Kathy Petersen

way to run the heat lamps. We also live in Virginia and this winter in particular has been a bit extreme in temperatures. We heat our farrowing buildings with a propane heater which keeps it nice and cozy for the newborn piglets. It is mounted on the wall up high so as not to have hay blow into it in any way. Always use caution when using heat lamps and any heat source.

You will want to plan your pig rails or crush rails as well. In the picture you can see the creep and the pig rails we have in our farrowing building. The purpose of these rails is to allow a piglet to “escape” should a mom get close to laying on them. I cannot say that our crush rails have really been used but, sometimes the babies so go under them to sleep away from mom. Most of the time, the piglets go to the heat lamps to warm and to mom to eat. This is when the creep comes into play. I hang my heat lamps over the creep so as to draw the piglets to this area so that they are not squished.



We used to use pine bedding on the floor of our farrowing quarters for it to absorb urine as the piglets begin to go potty in there. Then we placed hay on top of it. Later we switched to just hay as when newborns are born and mom builds her nest she will bring the pine bedding to the top where it sticks to the wet piglets.

Five weeks before the mom farrows you will want to give her another dose of Rhini Shield TX4 or Toxiac AD & E whichever one that you use before you bred her. Then another dose two weeks prior to her due date. This helps pass immunities over to the babies when they begin to nurse in her milk. Now you are awaiting that exciting day of farrowing.

When mom gets close to farrowing, most will begin to paw and dig at the hay. They will rearrange it and some even make a big bowl in the hay. You will begin to see her vulva swell and her teats become elongated. You can even feel the babies inside kicking and turning. I still get very excited to feel that. I will usually wipe mom off with a damp rag with a disinfectant as well just to get off excess dirt.

One of the things that amazed me when seeing the piglets born was that each piglet comes out with their cords cut and out of the sack. My background for 10+ years, was in raising Australian shepherds so to me this was truly amazing. Most times there are bits and pieces of the sack still on the piglet. I usually pick up the piglets and with a towel, I wipe them off good. If you are the type of breeder that does not want to interfere with the delivery process, it will dry off. Within a few moments, the piglet is up on their feet and able to walk and even run around! I was shocked! Puppies do nothing for 2 weeks after birth but, scoot around and they cannot see or hear. So imagine my shock to see piglets running around with their ears open, eyes open in moments! It is amazing!

When mom has finished farrowing she will deliver the after birth. I clean up and dispose of that quickly after that comes out. That is usually how you will know that the birthing process is over. Occasionally, a

mom will deliver one horn of the after birth and have more piglets and then the other side of the horn after birth will come out. I have only had this happen 1-2 times since I have been farrowing piglets. The afterbirth will be shaped like “Y” if spread out. I have to admit that this is my least favorite thing to do. I am a bit squeamish on that one thing.

After many years of raising KuneKunes now, I love the birthing process and do all I can to ensure that I am present for a birth. Not so much because the mom needs assistance but, just because I do enjoy being a part of such an amazing moment in life – the miracle of birth.

I usually wait for the piglets to be a couple of hours old and I will cut their umbilical cords shorter so that they can move around better without their cords being stepped on or wrapped up in the hay. I will spray the cords at the cut point with iodine spray as well. KuneKunes mothers are just amazing mothers and they call their babies to them to eat. They make little noises while their babies nurse too which is said that the mom is singing to her babies.

If you have children, this is an amazing experience to share with them. KuneKunes mom do not mind you being present to watch the miracle that is happening and later are very receptive to your interactions with her piglets.

I hope that you have learned a bit about the farrowing quarters, breeding and birth of this amazing breed. No matter how many litters we have, each one is truly a new and wonderful experience here at Virginia KuneKunes.

For more information please visit our website at [www.virginiakunekunes.com](http://www.virginiakunekunes.com)