Normal Delivery Positions

Anterior (forward) Presentation
When the pig causes head-first through the birth canal, the front legs are folded back against the pig’s chest wall. The back legs trail behind. About 55% of pigs are born this way.

Posterior (backward) Presentation
These pigs are born with their back legs coming first, their front legs are extended under their chin. This is also known as: the “rationing” position. About 45% of pigs are born this way.

Abnormal Delivery Positions

Doubled-Over Position
This is a very difficult position to correct because the pig’s back bone becomes wedged in the birth canal. If the sow is small or the pig is fairly large, correcting this problem is even more difficult. This situation can best be corrected using the techniques used to solve a breech presentation. To nudge the pig forward so you can hook a finger under one of its rear legs. Pull the legs toward you so you position it in the normal, posterior position. If uncorrected, a cesarean section may be required.

Two Pigs Presented at Once
In this situation, two pigs belly-to-belly are passing through the birth canal together. Often, one pig is coming backward, the other is presented head first. Both may come backward or head first. If you can reach the pigs, usually you can grip one pig and deliver it, then go back to pull the other. In most of these cases, assistance is required because the sow is unable to move the combined mass of the pigs up into the pelvic area.

Heavy Uterus
A large litter of 14 or more pigs can cause the uterine wall to cause it to form an “S” curve, which pushes part of the uterus underneath the pelvis. Under extreme situations, the uterus cannot contract enough to push the pigs up and over the pelvic brim. Assist ing delivery of the first pig will usually allow the “S” curve to straighten out and the rest of the pigs can be extracted normally.

Other Common Difficulties

Over-sized Pigs: Pigs too big to pass through the sow’s pelvis is fairly common. If the sow is not assisted soon enough, one or more pigs may die. If pigs begin to decompose and swell up with gas, the situation is critical as the decomposing pigs are poisoning the sow. As the sow becomes exhausted, it becomes impossible for her to push the bloated pigs out of the birth canal. Timely assistance by you or your veterinarian is critical.

Uterine Inertia: This failure of the uterus to contract is blamed for about one-third of problem farrmings. Usually, this problem results from a hormonial or nutritional disturbance. Energy deficiencies are often cited. Mineral imbalances are less common. Uterine inertia may occur in an extended farming when the sow becomes exhausted and the uterus loses its ability to contract and push all of the pigs out.

Full Colon (Constipation): The colon becomes very full and pushes against the pelvic brim. Assisting delivery of the first pig will usually allow the “S” curve to straighten out and the rest of the pigs can be extracted normally.

Abdominal Cavity
In addition to the reproductive organs, this area contains the small intestine and the colon. The colon runs above the birth canal and extends back to the rectum.

Sacrum: The end of the spinal column, which is connected to the lower part of the pelvis.

Pelvis: The area occupied by the pelvis, which is curved outwards. The pelvis is divided into two parts – each occupied by one half of the uterus.

Pelvic Space (Pelvic Cavity): The area occupied by the rectum, vagina and the bladder, which runs forward to the urethra.

Bladder: Extends over the front of the pelvis, just below the vagina.

Breech Position
This complication occurs when the pig moves through the birth canal backwards. The pig’s rump is caught over the floor of the birth canal, the front legs are folded back against the pig’s chest wall, the rear legs trail behind. About 55% of pigs are born this way.

Double-over Position
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Posterior (backward) Presentation
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