

# GLOSSARY



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
The Royal (Dick) School  
of Veterinary Studies

The Jeanne Marchig International Centre  
for Animal Welfare Education

## Terms

## Description

Belly-nosing	A repetitive nuzzling or pushing behaviour performed with the nose against the stomach of a pen mate, similar in form to the udder massage piglets carry out with their mothers but redirected towards another animal
Boar	A male pig
Breed complementarity	When two breeds are combined in crossbreeding to complement strengths and weaknesses of each other
Colostrum	The first milk produced by a mother, which is rich in fats, growth factors and immunoglobulins to provide passive transfer of immunity
Cross-foster	When some of the piglets of one sow are introduced into the litter of another lactating sow, which is not their mother
Culled	An animal that is removed from its group (by slaughter) commonly due to reproductive failure, weakness or sickness
Dominance hierarchy	A form of animal social structure in which a linear or nearly linear ranking exists, with each animal dominant over those below it and submissive to those above it in the hierarchy



Terms	Description
Emotional contagion	A form of social contagion that involves matching of emotions and related behaviours of a subject an animal with another
Environmental enrichment	Change in captive animal's environment in a way that improves the animal's quality of life by encouraging expression of motivated behaviours (e.g. trees, vines, perching areas and even toys, or using different substrates, such as sand, mulch, grass)
Farrow(ing)	Give birth to a litter of piglets
Farrowing crate	An individual restrictive housing of farrowing sows, which prevents the sow from turning around, and where sows may be housed from 5-7 days before farrowing until artificial weaning of piglets. <sup>1</sup>
Free farrowing	Systems where sows are not confined in a farrowing crate during farrowing and lactation
Gestation stall	An individual restrictive stall, which prevents the pig from turning around, where pregnant sows/gilts may be housed throughout gestation until 5-7 days before farrowing. <sup>1</sup>
Gilt	A young adult female pig that has not yet produced (farrowed) a litter of piglets
Heterosis	The increase in desirable characteristics (growth, size, fecundity, function, yield, or other) in crossbred animals over those of the parents
Nest-building	A behaviour of late pregnant pigs to dig, scrape and use substrate (e.g. hay, tree branches, straw, leaves etc) to construct a secluded and protected space to give birth (a 'nest')

Terms	Description
Oestrus cycle	The female reproductive cycle, encompassing the period when the female is able to become pregnant when mated and when she is not.
Piglet	Offspring of pigs
Pork	Meat from a pig, usually fresh and not smoked or salted
Rearing/Finisher	A pig that is fattened for slaughter (also called a fattening or slaughter pig)
Sham-chewing	When a pig shows mouthing movements that appear similar to eating but without intaking any food items
Slatted floor	A floor composed of slats of wood/concrete with gaps so that liquid can drain away
Slurry system	A system to collect and process animal faeces and other organic waste for conversion into wet and dry fertilizer
Sow	An adult female pig that has farrowed one or more litters
Stereotypic behaviour	A repetitive, invariant behaviour pattern with no obvious goal or function
Stillborn piglet	A piglet that is born dead or found dead at the first check up after farrowing with no signs of mummification
Swill feeding	Feeding of kitchen waste (to pigs) <sup>2</sup>
Temporary crating	A system or practice where the sow is confined in a farrowing crate for a short period of time, but not the whole of lactation
Weaning	The separation of the young animal from its mother (in commercial farming) or the end of the milk feeding phase (by either the mother or artificially)
Weaner/Grower	A weaned piglet with the body weight up to around 25 to 30kg

<sup>1</sup>Not used in all commercial housing systems, and periods may vary among farms/countries.

<sup>2</sup>This is an illegal practice in a number of countries

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