

# AFFECTIVE STATE



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

The Jeanne Marchig International Centre  
for Animal Welfare Education

**What you will learn: The relationship between affective states and welfare in pigs**

The differences in the life cycle of wild pigs in nature and pigs in commercial farms.

How most commercial farms for pigs are structured and managed.

Main welfare issues to look for in the pig industry and opportunities to promote positive animal welfare.

## Affective State

The range of cognitive and emotional abilities in pigs should be considered in animal welfare management on farm. Pigs are capable of learning and making associations between place, objects and people and positive or negative emotions, which can influence their welfare on farm.

As briefly discussed in the previous sections, nutrition, physical environment, behaviour, human-animal relationships, and health may have negative or positive effects on the mental state (emotions) of the pigs. Simultaneously, pigs' emotions may also influence positively or negatively its behaviour, physiology and cognition.



For example:

- An outdoor pig that is unable to seek shade or has no place for wallowing on a hot day, will likely feel uncomfortably hot and may show signs of hyperthermia, which can also compromise production.
- Breeding stocks in a restricted feed regime, or piglets with no access to milk, may show signs of hunger and frustration. Also, malnutrition will negatively affect pigs' immune system, and they may be more susceptible to diseases.
- Having regular gentle contacts between humans and pigs can increase play behaviour in pigs, which are associated with positive emotions.
- Pigs reared in an enriched environment show more positive behaviours, more environmental engagement and have fewer behavioural issues than those who have no enrichment available.
- Gentle interactions with humans induce more positive emotions in piglets, while negative handling leads to avoidance responses associated with fear. This can also make pigs harder to handle.
- Piglets that experience enriched neonatal environments play more, have better social and cognitive development. They also have growth rate advantages and robust immune system.
- Outdoor systems have a more complex environment compared to the indoor system, providing piglets with a range of sensory stimuli, spatial dimensions, and opportunities to interact with materials, novelty and cognitive challenges. This complex environment promotes positive emotions.



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E: [JM.Welfare@ed.ac.uk](mailto:JM.Welfare@ed.ac.uk)

W: [www.ed.ac.uk/vet/jeanne-marchig-centre](http://www.ed.ac.uk/vet/jeanne-marchig-centre)

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