

# BOAR EXPOSURE: GILT DEVELOPMENT



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## ALL HIGH PRODUCING SOW FARMS HAVE TWO THINGS IN COMMON:

- A predictable supply of gilts that weigh 300-330 lbs at breeding and are being bred on their second or greater estrus.
  - Sows that return to estrus day 3 to 5 post wean.
- \*Proper Boar Exposure is critical to meet these goals.

## 4 METHODS OF BOAR EXPOSURE FOR GILT DEVELOPMENT

- The ideal method is the BEAR (Boar Exposure Area) Method. This method involves housing boars in their own room and bringing gilts to the boars for 10-15 minutes of direct exposure in the pens. Most commercial farms are not set up to have separate boar housing but it yields strong results.
- One of the most common methods is to bring the boars into the gilt pens. There should be 1 boar per 12 gilts. All gilts should be up and on their feet to interact with the boar for direct contact with the boars for 10-15 minutes. Boars will tire and lose effectiveness so they must be rotated after 4 pens.
- The second most common process is to bring boars into the alleyway along the fence line. There should be 1 boar per 12 gilts. With this method, it is critical to have enough fence line for all gilts to have nose-to-nose contact with boars for 10-15 minutes. If all the gilts in a pen cannot reach the fence to have nose-to-nose interactions with the boar, the gilt may not receive enough exposure to exhibit a standing estrus response.
- The last method is a sleepover method with vasectomized boars. In this process, boars are placed with gilts for an extended period of time beginning at 23 weeks of age. Boars should be removed from pens for 1 day before bringing boars back to heat check for breeding. The downside of this method is that you can't easily identify when and if gilts cycled during the sleepover period.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS:

### **AVOID CONTINUOUS EXPOSURE**

Gilts can become refractory to boar stimuli and will not exhibit the normal signs of estrus. If boars are housed in the same room with gilts, boars should be placed near exhaust fans.

### **HNS**

Boar Exposure is critical to identify a gilt's first estrous cycle. This allows for a Skip Heat or Heat no Service which increases total born and born alive in the first parity and affects overall lifetime productivity. Breeding between the 2nd and 4th cycle increases total born by ~1.5 and the farrow rate by ~10%.

### **WEIGHT**

Gilts should be a minimum of 265 pounds before starting boar exposure. Weight is the most important determining factor for gilts to cycle.

Below are the targets for gilts cycling by age after 3 weeks of boar exposure. If you are not achieving these numbers please reach out to a DNA representative.

| AGE | PERCENT CYCLING |
|-----|-----------------|
| 24  | 40%             |
| 26  | 60%             |
| 28  | 80%             |
| 30  | 90%             |
| 32  | 95%             |

**LOW PRODUCING FARMS OR FARMS THAT STRUGGLE TO MEET BREEDING TARGETS LIKELY HAVE ONE OF THESE METHODS IMPLEMENTED BUT MAY BE MISSING A CRITICAL PART OF THE PROCESS.**

**FREQUENTLY, THE RATIO OF BOARS TO GILTS IS TOO LOW AND THE TIME SPENT HEAT CHECKING IS INSUFFICIENT TO IDENTIFY HEAT. IN ALL FOUR METHODS, DIRECT CONTACT IS CRITICAL.**