



## **Everyday husbandry and feeding for all breeds of pig.**

**Dr Victoria Hudson BSc(Hons) BVM&S MRCVS**

### **Feeding:**

- **Types of food:**
  - Pigs should be fed a commercially made pig pellet which contains 18-22% protein and a variety of minerals. Young, fast growing pigs require adequate amounts of calcium for optimal bone growth, protein for muscle development and minerals for organ function. If a pig is fed inadequate amounts of protein and calcium their growth may become stunted and lead to a multitude of health issues.
  - Lucerne or oaten chaff can be fed as a source of fibre.
  - They can also be given a variety of fresh vegetables and fruit which have not been in contact with kitchen waste or meat. Fruit is high in sugar so should be fed sparingly as it can be very fattening!
  - Grain can be fed as a small treat.
- **How much to feed:**
  - Pigs should be fed 2% of their bodyweight in pellets every day.
  - Chaff can be fed ad lib.
  - Fresh veg, fruit and grain can be used as a daily treat.
- **Water:**
  - Clean fresh water must be available at all times.
  - A large shallow dog bowl or tub is a suitable drinking source. Pigs cannot stretch their necks up very far so many buckets are too tall for them.
  - Pigs can drink 50ml per Kg of their bodyweight per day and if they are deprived of water for any amount of time this can be fatal due to salt toxicity, particularly in hot weather.

### **Monitoring body condition and weight:**

- **Regular weight checks:**
  - Monthly weight checks are a useful way to check that your pig is growing and healthy.
  - An up-to-date weight is required to guide feeding amounts.
  - Your local vet will have weight scales suitably sized for any pig and they can record the weight for you to keep track of growth.
- **Body condition scoring:**
  - Your local vet can assess the body condition score of your pig to ensure that it is growing properly and also not getting too fat!

- The ideal body condition score is 2.5-3 (see attached charts). Pigs only have small legs so are not built for carrying a lot of extra weight as fat.

### **Housing:**

- **Living area space:**
  - Boars/castrated males require a minimum living space of 7.5m<sup>2</sup>.
  - Sows/gilts require a minimum living space of 2.8m<sup>2</sup>
- **Shelter:**
  - Pigs require shelter from both inclement and hot weather. A hut or house which provides shade, cover from rain and wind protection will be ideal. It should be big enough for the pig to grow into and turn around in.
  - It is useful to have a door on the shelter with a top and bottom bolt to securely confine the pig in case a medical examination is required.
- **Bedding:**
  - Pigs enjoy making their own bed in deep straw or shavings but can also sleep on rubber matting or a slatted concrete floor.
- **Toys:**
  - Pigs are highly intelligent creatures and like to be kept occupied. Hard large balls, large dog toys and treat food 'treasure hunts' are great fun for them.

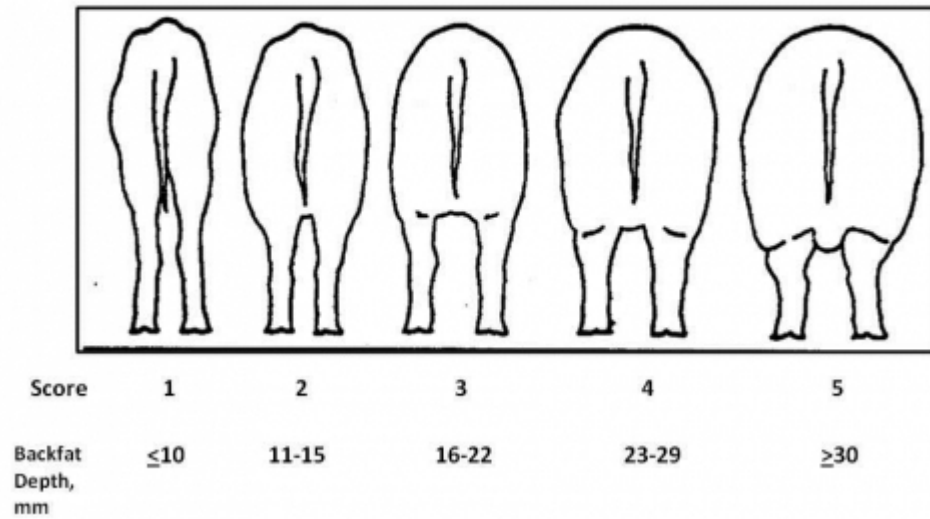
### **Health care:**

- **Worming:**
  - Pet pigs who live on concrete should be wormed once a year.
  - If they have access to a paddock or lawn then they have a greater risk of getting worms. Their faeces should be submitted monthly for a faecal float test. This assesses if they have a high worm burden which requires treatment.
  - We would recommend that pigs should follow this protocol:
    - Ivermectin injection annually to treat for Ascarid worms (available from your vet).
    - Nilverm oral dewormer (given in their water bowl) monthly if a high roundworm or whip worm burden is seen on a faecal float test (available from animal feed stores).
- **Vaccinations:**
  - Vaccinations are recommended to protect your pig from the most common fatal diseases which are Leptospirosis, *E.coli* scours and Erysipelas.
  - Vaccine protocol: A primary course of 2 vaccinations given 4-6weeks apart, followed by annual boosters.
- **Veterinary health care check ups:**
  - At Sydney University Livestock Veterinary Services (Camden), we provide annual health check ups which include a health exam, vaccination and parasite management for pet pigs.
  - We are happy to discuss cases with your local vet and also provide a referral service for more complex medical and surgical problems.

Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the University of Sydney Livestock Veterinary Services Department on 02 4655 0777.






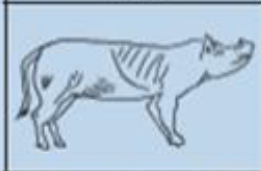
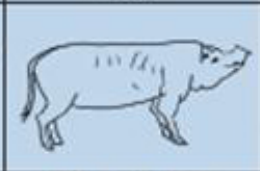
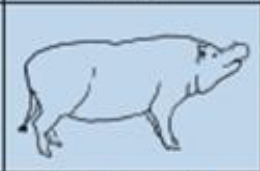
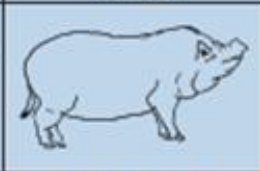
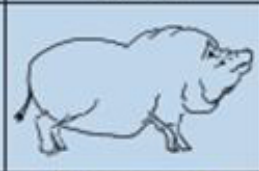


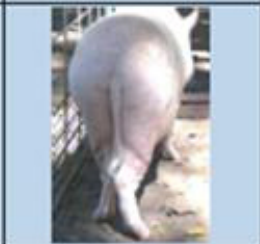

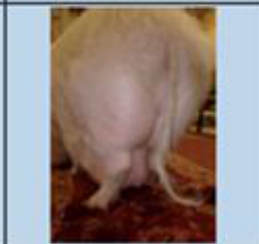










University of Sydney, Livestock Veterinary Services, Camden. T:02 4655 0777

Figure 1. Body Condition Score Chart



## Body condition scores

Overweight pigs are extremely common and this can result in serious welfare problems ranging from 'fat blindness' (ie, the eyes are obscured by fat) to increased rates of arthritis. There is no normal weight for a pet pig, but animals should be maintained at a body condition score of 2 to 2.5 from nine months to eight years of age, and at 2.5 to 3 thereafter.

| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4  | 5  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
|    |    |   |   |   |
|    |    |   |   |   |
|   |   |    |    |    |
|    |    |   |   |   |
|    |    |   |   |   |
| <p><b>Dairy goat shape</b><br/>Ribs can be seen<br/>Backbone is obvious<br/>Tailhead is higher than the backbone from the side<br/>Eyes can be clearly seen</p> | <p><b>Flat/slab-sided</b><br/>Ribs can be felt<br/>Backbone can be felt<br/>Tail head is level with the backbone<br/>Eyes can be clearly seen</p> | <p><b>Tube</b><br/>Ribs are felt with difficulty<br/>Backbone is rounded<br/>Dip apparent in the middle of the back when viewed from the side<br/>Tail head is below the backbone when viewed from the rear</p> | <p><b>Bulbous</b><br/>Ribs cannot be felt<br/>Backbone is very rounded<br/>Prominent dip in the middle of back when viewed from the side<br/>Head is rounded, with the ears separating and recessed into head<br/>Eyes seen with difficulty<br/>Tail head is recessed into rump<br/>Perineal area sags</p> | <p><b>Bloated tick</b><br/>Distinct double hump to the crown and tail head<br/>Tail head is inverted in folds<br/>Folds of flesh hang from the head<br/>Folds of fat on the head push the ears forward<br/>Pig may be fat blind<br/>Stomach may touch the ground<br/>Legs are held further apart</p> |