



MOVING PIGS

Moving pigs is a core part of the routine on a pig unit and the proper handling of pigs at this time can reduce stress for both stockperson and pig. Improper handling of pigs can lead to poor animal welfare and economic losses incurred as a result of injuries.

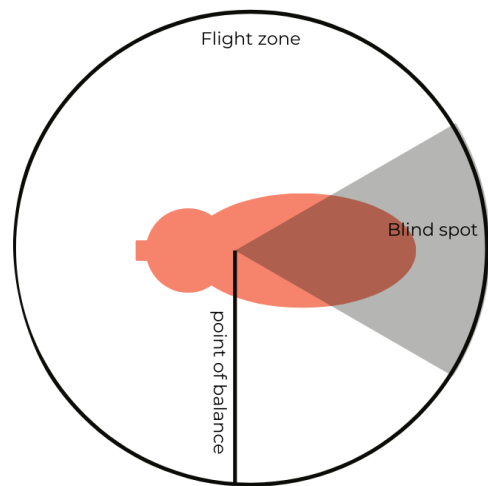


Pigs have a limited range of vision coupled with poor eyesight and rely heavily on their other senses, particularly their excellent hearing and acute sense of smell. For this reason, pigs will usually move with their head orientated towards the ground sniffing as they move.

The position and orientation of the eyes means the ability of the animal to calculate distances and depths is reduced. Pigs are naturally prey animals and have a well-established flight zone. Once anything perceived as dangerous, handlers included, enters the flight zone pigs will react by moving away from the threat.

The point of balance located at the shoulder determines in which direction the animal will move, if the perceived threat is behind the point of balance the pig will move forward but if it is in front, the pig will move backwards.

Pigs do not like wind blowing in their faces and may baulk away from it, pigs prefer to move towards a lighter area but will not approach very strong light.



YOU WILL NEED:

- Handling aids such as driving board and paddle
- It is recommended to have at least two people working together when moving pigs

HOW TO MOVE PIGS

- Ensure all passageways are clean, tidy and free from any obstacles such as trays, buckets and even puddles in advance as this can distract the animals and cause backlogs during movement.
- Ensure the way forward is secure and obvious to the pigs. It is a good idea to use solid gates or barriers to block off passageways and openings along the route, as pigs may try to escape and can injure themselves when attempting to do so.
- Calm pigs are far easier to work with than excited pigs and as such it is critical that animals are handled with care and patience. Loud noises and yelling can stress and confuse the animals whereas less aggressive methods such as whistling, clapping and rattles in paddles will keep pigs moving.
- To reduce stress and minimise disturbance, pigs should be moved in small groups, at walking pace and without excessive noise. Pregnant sows in particular should be handled with extreme care and walked at their own pace.
- Handling equipment should be in good working order and free from any defects that could cause injury to the handler or animal. Driving boards should be used as a physical barrier when moving pigs, never to strike the animal. Paddles filled with rattles work as an auditory stimulus to move pigs, as a visual barrier when placed close to the animals head and can be used to gently tap the pigs forward.
- It is not acceptable to use sticks or prods, or to physically strike or poke animals during handling.
- Always walk behind or beside the rearmost pig in the group. Any handlers positioned ahead of the pig such as at the door of a shed or at the loading ramp should remain quiet until the pigs have passed as the animals may hesitate at

unfamiliar noise ahead.

- Because pigs have poor depth perception, bright light and shadows can cause confusion. It is recommended that there is an even flow of light between passageways and rooms when moving pigs, turning on all lights in the room the pigs are being moved into can help.
- Steps or severe slopes can cause animals to hesitate which in turn will lead to backlogs during movement. Try to minimise any steps or severe slopes on routes that pigs regularly travel through opting instead for low gradient ramps.
- Air movement as pigs are about to exit a shed can cause problems, if the room is fan ventilated it may help to switch off the fans while moving pigs to reduce the movement of air through the door. It is very important that the fans are switched on immediately after the last pigs have left the house.

LOADING RAMPS

Loading pigs onto the lorry is a weekly job, a good loading bay is important.

- The ramp should be low gradient with a non-slip surface.
- Gates and sides of loading ramps should be solid to minimise distractions and to prevent wind blowing at the animals which can cause pigs to hesitate.
- When it is lowered, the ramp of the lorry should lie flush with the loading bay. Any step up into the lorry can cause backlogs and lead to injuries.
- The bay should always be well lit to allow for safe loading. On dark winter mornings, it is a good idea to have a light shining into the lorry to encourage pigs forward into a brighter area.
- Pigs should not be left idling for long periods in a loading bay. It is best practice to move pigs directly from pens into the lorry.