Nurse Sows

1. Purpose of Having Nurse Sows
   a. Exploit the good piglets in the system and move those animals forward
   b. Identify problem piglets early and get them into a new litter and better situation
   c. Correct problem animals before they become chronic
   d. Keep pigs in the same age range and peer group

2. Identification of Pigs
   a. The ideal time is at 5-7 days of age (however, nurse sows can be utilized in older piglets as well)
   b. Look at pig condition
      • Is the pig’s belly full
      • Is the hair coat slick and smooth
      • Is the back bone showing
   c. Pigs spending a lot of time at the udder
   d. Pigs drinking supplemental water

3. Identification of Sows
   a. Pick sows that have shown good performance with their litter for nurse sows
   b. Evaluate the litter and underline when placing pigs on the sow (i.e. if you are placing 10 small piglets on a sow, make sure she has 10 working nipples and they are small enough the piglets can pull milk down from them)

4. Process of Making a Nurse Sow
   a. Count the number pigs that need to be moved. This number will determine how many nurse sows will be needed
   b. Move the biggest and best pigs forward to the next oldest room so the “good sow” is available to be used as a nurse sow (you may need to move several litters to get an open sow in the room where she is needed)
   c. Example
      1. The pigs in the room B are approximately 5-7 days old and 9 pigs on various sows in are falling behind (This means that you will need to bump wean 1 litter)
      2. Find the biggest and best litter in Room B and move them forward to the next oldest room (then use this sow to nurse the pigs that are falling behind)
      3. The pigs that were moved forward from room B are then put on a sow that has the biggest and best 14-15 day old litter, then either
         • wean the 14-15 day old litter
         • or move them to a sow that has the biggest and best 18-20 day old pigs and wean the 18-20 day old pigs to the nursery
**See also the Bump Weaning/Cross Fostering Fact Sheet**