



# Farrowing House Series

## - Frenderupgaard

Frenderupgaard is a 1,400-sow operation owned by Niels Aagaard Jørgensen and his wife Mia, producing roughly 52,000 pigs annually sold at 30kg under UK production standards for Danish Crown. The farm features three styles of reduced-confinement farrowing pens, alongside 60 remaining crates. This case study focuses on their preferred pen design, which will eventually replace all crates. Frenderupgaard is a full-line DanBred genetic system, including Top Duroc semen.



### Reduced-confinement pens

- **Size:** 3 x 1.8 = 5.4m<sup>2</sup>
- **Number:** 348 pens installed in 2020
- **Schedule:** weekly farrowing
- **Floor:** 2/3 cast iron slats, 1/3 concrete
- **Creep:** positioned opposite aisle way for easy viewing of piglets, floor and lamp heating is set to a cooling curve, and disinfectant powder is added pre-farrowing, then as necessary to keep dry.
- **Enrichment:** straw provided daily to the sow via a metal rack.
- **Benefits:** a draft is provided at the front of each sow to keep her cool and encourage the piglets to stay within their creep.
- **Improvement opportunity:** future pens will be expanded to 3 x 2m to allow for ease of movement for older/larger sows.

### Sow and piglet management

Sows are acclimatised to pens for 3 - 4 days, and then confined for 24 hours prior to their due date. Crates are opened again four days post-farrowing. Straw is placed behind the sow during farrowing to help piglets dry quickly after birth and temporary boards are used to guide them straight to the creep. Larger litters are managed by allocating up to 30% of pens for nurse sows, with milk cups also used. Nurse sows (up to parity 3) are given two extra piglets than their number of functional teats to maximise milk capacity and encourage udder development in gilts.

Sows are fed three times a day during lactation, and increased to four once all sows in a section have farrowed. Piglets are locked within the creep every time the sow is fed for the first 24 hours.

Tail docking and iron injections are performed within the first two days of life. Male piglets are left entire. While sow aggression during piglet protection is rare, staff are encouraged to place signs at her pen to notify staff to take more time and be cautious. On average, pigs are weaned at 26 days of age, around 6.5kg.

## Learning the system

The farm employs eight full-time staff, with three specialised in farrowing house management. Staff come from diverse backgrounds, including Danish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Ugandan.

While cultural and language differences can pose communication challenges, Niels emphasises that success lies not just in having a plan, but in following up with staff to ensure tasks are understood and completed. Weekly team meetings are held to outline responsibilities, discuss any procedural changes, and ensure consistent care for sows and piglets. Frenderupgaard uses a herd recording software, to assess animals on an individual basis and help communication between stock people ensuring animal follow ups are completed.

The team's transition to the reduced-confinement system was relatively smooth, thanks to having employees who were genuinely interested in working within such systems. The farm did not experience a significant drop in production during the transition, with an average of 19.2 piglets born alive per litter and a pre-wean mortality of 10.5%. Niels attributes this to strong preparation and learning from other producers' experiences.



“ I have always been interested in the system with loose housing...there were a lot of farmers who said ‘**oh, we couldn't do that'... but we still did it** ”

## Advice to farmers

Niels has long been interested in reduced-confinement systems, and once the decision was made, his mindset shifted to focusing on solutions rather than obstacles. The biggest challenge was the upfront cost of infrastructure due to the larger pen footprint, but advice from other farmers helped guide the process.

He and his staff are active in professional learning networks, which provided valuable insights and helped his staff prepare for the transition. Frenderupgaard now regularly hosts visiting farmers exploring reduced-confinement systems and runs open days for schools and the public to showcase modern pig production in Denmark.

*APL continues to support traditional farrowing systems while recognising and supporting research into alternative systems, balancing the health and welfare of sow, piglets and the people caring for them. Research is part of our commitment to demonstrating science led animal welfare which underpins our commitment to continual improvement in the care of our pigs and our people.*



### MORE INFORMATION

For technical information, contact the APL team at [extension@australianpork.com.au](mailto:extension@australianpork.com.au)