

# Piglet Handling



## Disclaimer

A series of booklets has been developed by the Clinical Skills Lab team (staff, recent graduates and students) from the School of Veterinary Sciences, University of Bristol, UK.

Please note:

- Each booklet illustrates one way to perform a skill and it is acknowledged that there are often other approaches. Before using the booklets students should check with their university or college whether the approach illustrated is acceptable in their context or whether an alternative method should be used.
- The booklets are made available in good faith and may be subject to changes.
- In using these booklets you must adopt safe working procedures and take your own risk assessments, checked by your university, college etc. The University of Bristol will not be liable for any loss or damage resulting from failure to adhere to such practices.

This work is under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



© The University of Bristol, 2020



University of  
**BRISTOL**

Year Group: BVSc2 +



University of  
BRISTOL

## Equipment list: Piglet Handling

Equipment for this station:

- Model piglet

Considerations for this station:

- There are some useful supporting teaching materials in the pig practicals section of Blackboard in Animal Management 2.

Anyone working in the Clinical Skills Lab must read the 'CSL\_I01 Induction' and agree to abide by the 'CSL\_I00 House Rules' & 'CSL\_I02 Lab Area Rules'

Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



# Clinical Skills: Piglet Handling

1



Approach a piglet quietly and slowly. Catch a piglet by grasping its hind leg just above the hock.

Never pick up a piglet by a front limb or its tail as this is painful and may cause damage.

2



While holding the hindleg with one hand, place the other hand under the chest to provide support as the piglet is lifted.

This technique is only appropriate for small piglets, typically under 10kg.

3



Hold the piglet against your body, with your hand and/or forearm under the piglet's chest to support it.

Examine the piglet while it is in this position.

4



Locate the needle teeth - there are two in each quadrant of the mouth. They are positioned rostrally, in a similar position to where the canine teeth would be found in other animals.

Clipping of needle teeth is a commonly performed procedure, it helps to prevent teats chewing, tails chewing and general fight damage.

5



To return a piglet to the floor, crouch down and gently place the front limbs on the floor first. Then return the hind limbs to the ground and let go.

6



Tail docking is commonly performed on pig farms on piglets usually at 2-3 days old. A cauteriser is used to remove the tail and to prevent blood loss. When tail docking:

- The minimum length of tail remaining after docking must be  $\geq 6$  cm
- If a tail is short (6cm or less in length), only remove the tip.





Intramuscular injection site:  
**ham**  
(*semitendinosus*,  
*semimembranosus* and  
*biceps femoris*)

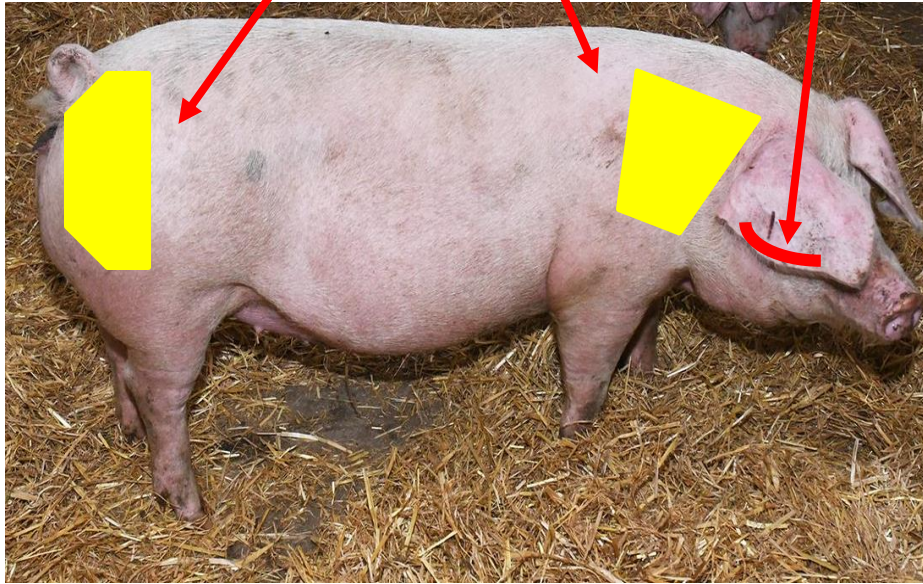
Intramuscular  
injection site:  
**neck**

Blood sampling  
site:  
**ear vein**

## Injection sites

Intramuscular (IM) injection sites - neck or ham. To reduce abscesses and carcass down grading, the neck is the preferred location for IM injections. Iron injections are typically given IM into the ham young pigs.

Blood sampling - ear vein is the easiest and most commonly used site. Alternatively the jugular vein or cranial vena cava can be used.

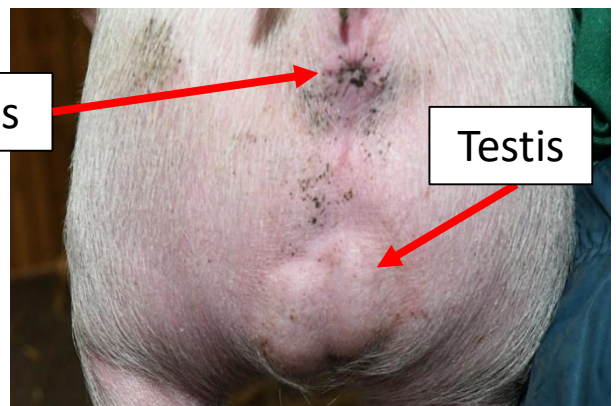
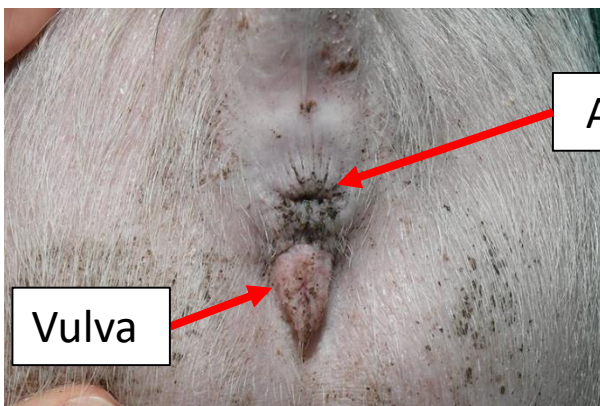


## Sexing

- To determine the sex of a piglet - the easiest way is to look for the presence of a vulva in a female and the absence of a vulva in a male. The vulva is located underneath the tail base and below the anus.
- Males have a urogenital opening on the ventral abdomen caudal to the umbilicus but this may not be very obvious in a young piglet. As the piglet grows this will become more apparent and testes will also become visible in the perineal region.
- Both sexes have nipples so this is not a suitable method to determine sex.

Female pig

Male pig





University of  
BRISTOL

# Resetting the station: Piglet Handling

1. Return the model pig to the exotics handling box ready for the next person.

*Station ready for the next person:*



Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.