Swine Characteristics

• Gregarious, social animals
• Social order
• Panoramic vision
• Follow each other
• Maintain visual and body contact
• Inquisitive nature
• Very susceptible to hot temperatures or conditions

Normal Swine Behavior

• Grunt/bark when agitated
• Squeal loudly when restrained or frightened
  – Use hearing protection
• Strong natural urge to escape
  – Gaps between pens, alleys, ramps, side gates, chutes
  – Often injure themselves

HANDLING

• Piglets
• Finisher pigs
• Boars
• Sows
Handling

- Non-slip flooring critical
- Primary movement aids
  - Flags, plastic paddles, panels
  - Frequent electric prod use is detrimental
- Move pigs in small groups of 5 or 6 to prevent turning around, bunching, piling up
- Distractions: Shadows, reflections, moving objects, air drafts, people, noises

Handling: Piglets

- Pick up and carry
  - Pick up by hind leg
  - Avoid swinging
  - Support chest if moving a distance
  - Never pick up by the ear
- Herding
  - Noise shakers
  - Move with sorting board using flight zone principles

Handling: Grower/Finisher Pigs

- Work in pairs
- Move small groups
- Utilize flight zone
  - Use sorting board to turn/stop pigs
- Watch for fatigue
  - Open mouthed breathing
  - Inability to move
  - Splotchy skin

Handling: Grower/Finisher Pigs

- Ensure path is clear, secure, obvious
- Move from dark to light areas with no shadows
- Move in calm, unhurried manner
  - Allow pigs to walk at their own pace
- Do not kick pigs
- Do not use sticks/prods to hit pigs

Handling: Boars

- Minimize aggression
- Move and load individually
- Separate pens to prevent injuries
- Allow extra time to become comfortable with new environment

Handling: Sows

- Older, large in size
  - Require extra time for movement, becoming comfortable with environment
- Move and load 2 or 3 at a time
- Increased aggression at points in reproductive cycle
  - Use caution when handling aggressive sows
RESTRAINT

- Piglets
- Older pigs

RESTRAINT: Piglets

- Lift piglet by back leg
  - Never by ear, front leg, tail
- Place hand under piglet’s chest
- Hold pig firmly
- Alternative: Place piglet over forearm with piglet’s chest in palm, legs hanging on either side of arm

RESTRAINT: Pigs

- Ensure work area is of proper size
- Apply pressure to hindquarters/flank to keep pig(s) still
- Perform procedure as quickly as possible, return to pen promptly

RESTRAINT: Pigs (cont’d)

- Use of snare may be necessary
  - Only used when absolutely necessary
  - Properly trained, competent handler
- Place loop in mouth, over top jaw/snout
- Hold snare handle vertically
- Move loop back before tightening
  - Second person performs task

RESTRAINT: Pigs (cont’d)

- Release pig as soon as possible
  - Loosen, release snare
- Do not restrain for prolonged periods of time
- Do not move pig with snare
- Do not tie pig up with snare

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