

Farrowing Stalls and Portable Pig Equipment

BY

IGNACIO V. ORTEGA ¹

Various workers have calculated that from 30 to 40 percent of the pigs that are born never reach the market. This tremendous loss is due to several causes, with disease undoubtedly playing a very important role in many cases; however, most of the deaths are attributable to unsatisfactory management practices. Housing and farrowing facilities are perhaps the most important ones involved.

During the first week of life the pig is entirely too weak and numb to protect itself from the sow, particularly if she is old, big or nervous. If no protection is afforded, the sow is capable of trampling and killing her brood.

Up to about ten years ago the recommended farrowing facilities consisted of small pens with guardrails located 10 to 15 inches from the floor and the same distance from the wall (Fig. 1). This type of farrowing pen provides adequate protection under good management practices. They limit, to a certain degree, the wanderings of the sow and afford laying protection to the pig, particularly around the corners of the pen. With the advent of farrowing stalls (Figs. 2 & 3) further protection has been added. Under this system now in use at the Escuela Agrícola Panamericana the sow is completely restrained and consequently limited in her movements. The small space afforded her does not permit any wandering around the stall and eliminates trampling or crushing the pigs. The little pig, on the other hand, has ample space to move and wander around the sow. Furthermore, when laying in her space, the sow exposes her udder to the pigs thus providing them sucking facilities with little or no danger. (Fig. 4).

Due to the nature of its structure, the box-like farrowing stall requires very little space but provides, nevertheless, an excellent opportunity to install adequately brooder lamps, creep feeder, waterers, etc. for the little pigs. These conveniences should be placed only in the space allocated to the pigs (Fig. 5).

In order to facilitate the management of the stalls, the sow should be placed on her own at least three days prior to farrowing. She

(1) Formerly Dept. of Animal Husbandry, Escuela Agrícola Panamericana, Zamorano, Honduras.

should be permitted to leave the stall a minimum of two times a day in order to feed and water as well as to exercise. During these first few days the sow will probably defecate and urinate on her bedding and will fuss about returning to the stall. Once she farrows, however, she will keep her bedding clean and will enter her stall without fuss or delay.

The sow and her brood should be removed to a larger space when the pigs are from 10 to 15 days old, as at this age the pigs will be sufficiently alert and strong enough to protect themselves from the sow.

A lack of sufficient feeding and watering equipment will not kill or maim any sow or her brood, but it will influence and lower the general performance of the animals. Under good management practices, the pigs should be provided with sufficient feeding and watering space in order to limit the competition between animals and consequently to increase their efficiency. The following feeding space is recommended: one linear foot of trough per pig, if hand troughs are used (Fig. 6), or one linear foot of automatic feeder per every three to four pigs on dry lot, or four to five on pasture (Fig. 7).

The hand trough can be easily constructed at the farm. It can be made of wood to any desired length or they can be made from large metal drums cut horizontally. If the latter type are made, the cut edges should be well filed or rounded to prevent cuts to the animals. A 10 foot trough should be considered for only ten pigs regardless if the pigs eat from one or both sides.

The automatic feeders can also be made easily and economically at the farm. They can be made of wood or they can be welded from any type of sheet metal. The capacity is optional according to the number of pigs to be fed, the amount of available feed, time, labor, etc. If they are not constructed at the farm, there are several brands of commercial feeders available on the market.

Water is the most economical "feed" available. It should be provided freely to the pig. In summer a pig requires from two to three gallons of water per day, according to his age and size, and in winter from one to two. As in the case of feeders, there are several types of watering devices used for pigs, from the vertical cut metal drum to the automatic waterers. Of the latter ones, the portable automatic fountain is perhaps the most practical and useful of all (Fig. 8). Its functioning mechanism is similar to that of dairy and beef cattle fountains. That is, it permits the flow of water when the animal taps the tongue-like spring on the cup. There are two types of fountains on the market, those for pressure lines and those for non-pressure sources. The latter type adjusted to 50 gallon drums provide excellent portable automatic waterers for up to 20 pigs each. (Fig. 9).

Under pasture conditions a properly constructed shelter or shade will do, much to increase the comfort of the pigs (Fig. 10). These shelters can be constructed of wood or metal in any desired length and width. Allow from six to seven square feet per every 200 pound hog. The shelters should be sturdy and well constructed to permit moving from place to place in well rotated pastures.

Fig. 1. (Upper left) Farrowing pen with guardrails.

Fig. 2. (Upper right) Farrowing stall with sow's laying space. Notice simplicity of structure.

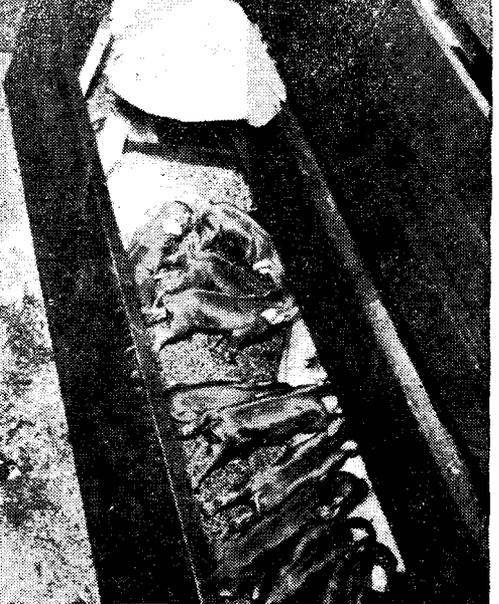
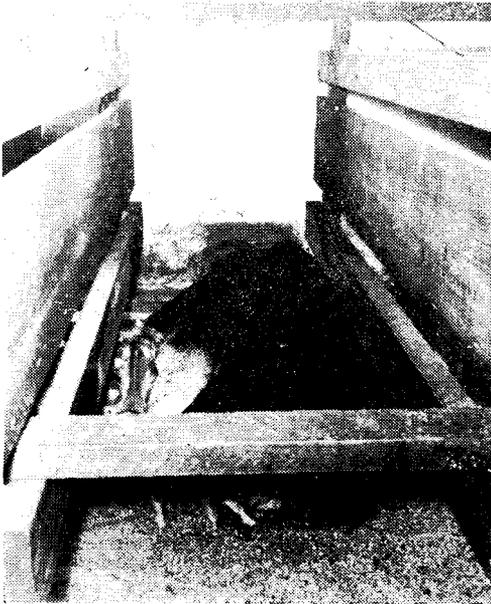
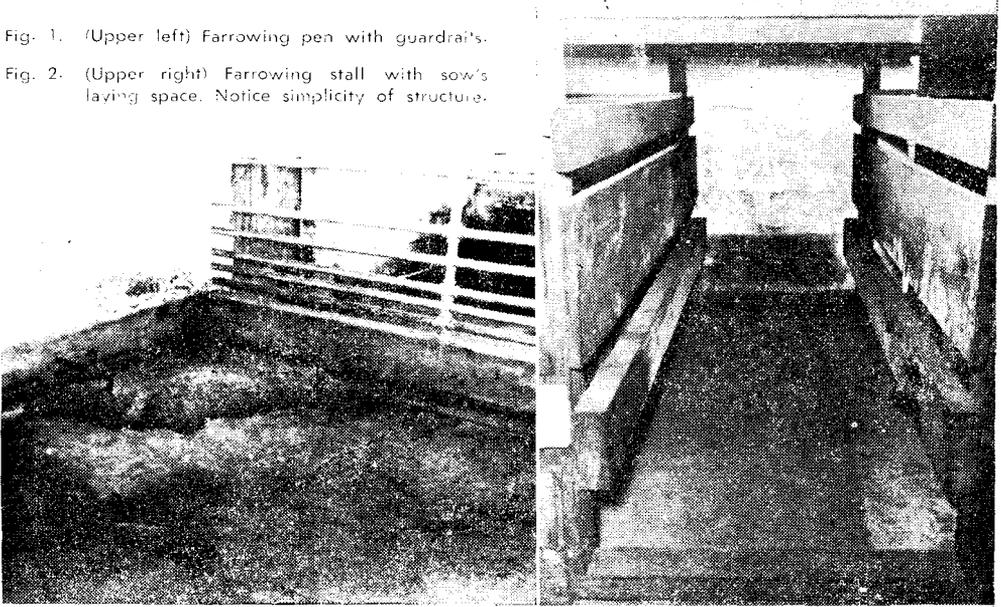


Fig. 3. (Lower left) Sow and litter in farrowing stall; the board in front is the only moveable object in the entire structure.

Fig. 4. (Lower right) Suckling litter in farrowing stall. Note the ample space for pigs, and space for brooder lamp under the cardboard hood.

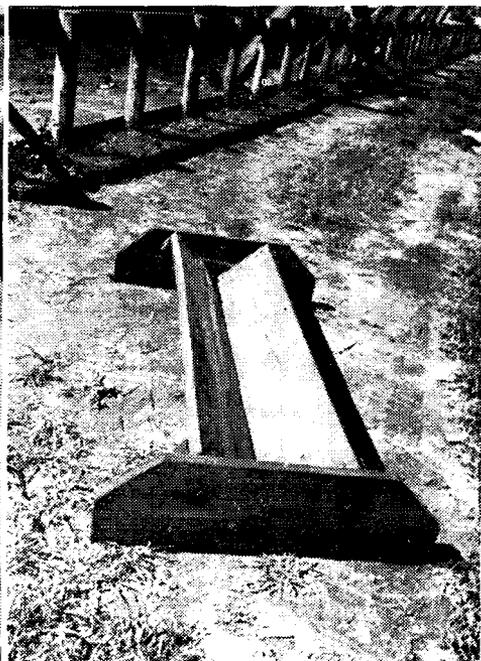
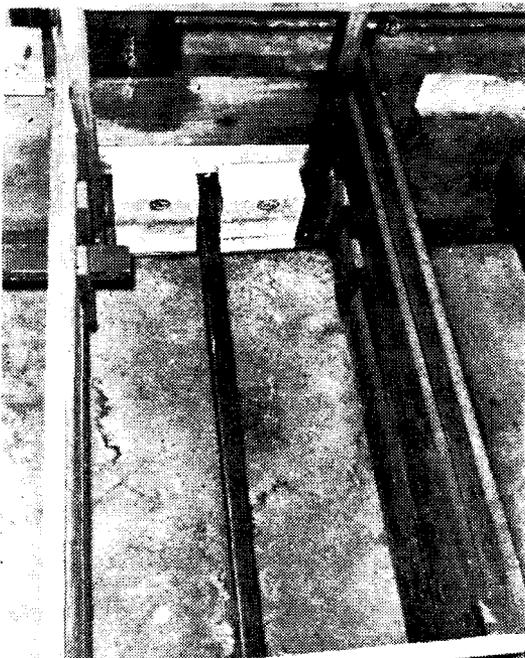
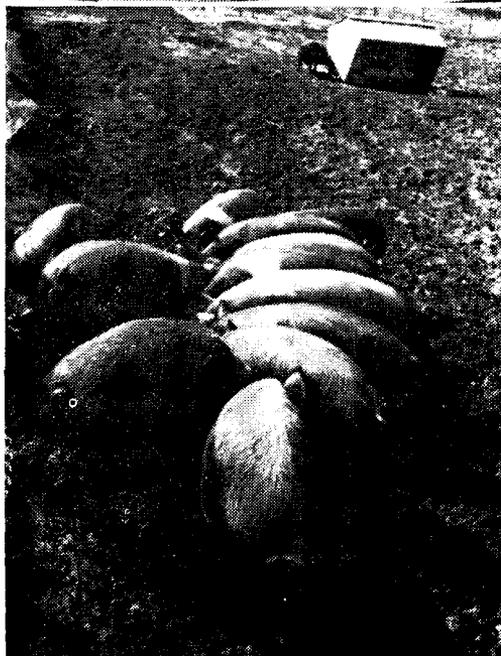


Fig. 5. (Upper left)
Creep feeders for piglets in farrowing stalls. The board at center divides two farrowing stalls.

Fig. 6. (Upper right)
An easily constructed and inexpensive hand feeder.

Fig. 7.
In the background is an automatic feeder; in the foreground is a hand feeder being used by several pigs.



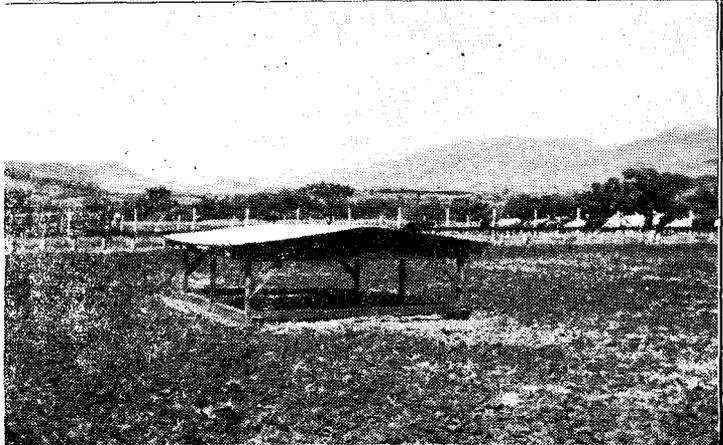
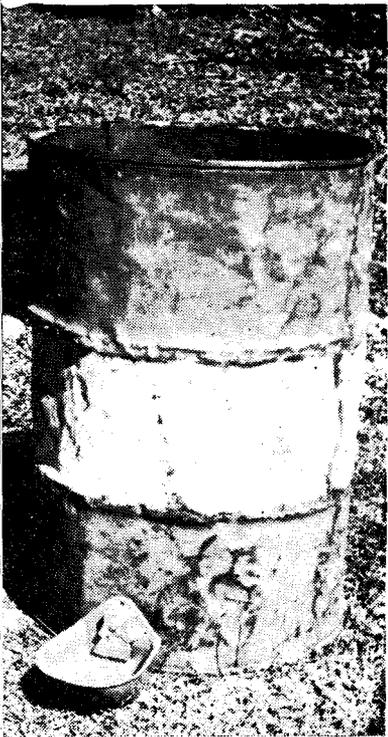
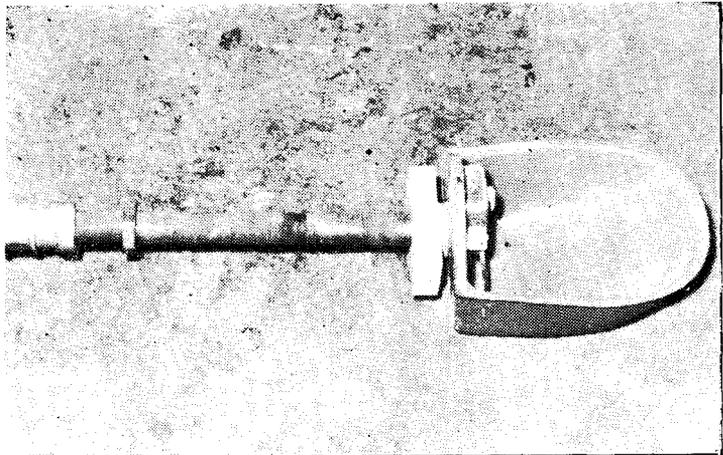


Fig. 8. (Upper left) An automatic water fountain for use with non-pressure sources.

Fig. 9. (Right) An easily constructed automatic waterer for pigs on pasture.

Fig. 10. (Lower left) A well shelter such as this one will do much to insure thrifty, economic pigs on pasture.

Resumen

Se ha calculado que de un 30 a un 40 por ciento de los cerditos que nacen no llegan al mercado. Esta pérdida tan sobresaliente se atribuye a varias causas, siendo las principales la carencia de zahurdas de parición y de equipo apropiado de explotación durante las primeras semanas de vida.

De las zahurdas de parición de más reciente diseño se recomiendan las de tipo de acajonamiento. Este tipo de zahurda restringe el movimiento de la hembra previniendo en consecuencia la muerte de los cerditos por aplastamiento. Proveen, sin embargo, suficiente espacio a los cerditos, tanto para su movimiento como para los comederos, calor, bebederos, etc., que éstos necesiten.

En comederos de mano se recomienda un espacio de un pie lineal por cada cerdo. Un comedero de 10 pies de largo es suficiente para 10 animales únicamente, sin importar si éstos comen de uno o de otro lado o de ambos a una misma vez. En comederos automáticos se recomienda un pie lineal por cada tres o cuatro cerdos en confinamiento o de cuatro a cinco en pastoreo.

En bebederos portátiles se recomienda el tipo de taza a presión para adaptarse a tanques de 50 galones. Un bebedero de este tipo en el tanque descrito provee suficiente agua hasta para un total de 20 cerdos por día.

Un buen sombreadero influirá mucho en el confort y eficiencia de los animales en pastoreo. Los sombreaderos deberán ser móviles y deberán proveer un espacio mínimo de seis pies cuadrados por cada cerdo de 200 lbs. de peso.