

Welcome to 2013

GROUP HOUSING SYSTEMS WITH FEEDING STATIONS - THE FACTS



The European Commission Council Directive 91/630/EC states that from 1 January 2013 sow farmers in the EU will have to house pregnant sows in a group.

If you are still not sure what to do, or you haven't yet started thinking about refurbishing your piggery, you might feel you're running out of time. But that's not surprising, because this kind of decision takes time, thought and money. And what are the options anyway? One thing is clear: **if you want it to, 2013 can begin tomorrow.**

Which system is best?

It's quite difficult for you as a pig farmer to make the right choices when confronted with all the group housing systems on the market. Like everyone else in the industry you probably have a number of **practical questions**, such as: which system is best for my farm, which system offers me the routine I need and the returns I'm looking for, and which system enables me to keep my pregnant sows in a group and still allows me to manage them?

Day-to-day practice

In this bulletin we describe the opportunities that group housing with feeding stations can offer you – not only in 2013 but well into the future too. Because the feeding station is a system that has been available on the market for some time, so it's tried and tested and ready for future developments.

We look at the seven most widely heard advantages of the system. Based on their practical experience, pig farmers and experts explain how group housing with feeding stations works for them.



Dynamic group with five feeding stations

THE SEVEN MOST WIDELY HEARD ADVANTAGES OF A FEEDING STATION

(see page 3)

- # 1 Better and more efficient farm management
- # 2 Peace and quiet in the group
- # 3 Easier to manage
- # 4 Better image
- # 5 Individual feeding
- # 6 Better technical results
- # 7 Nedap: innovative and reliable

SOW FARMERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

“THE FEEDING STATION REALLY SAVED OUR BACON”

Farm manager Vincent Rincé of the Le Chanteloup pig farm (FR)

“Nowadays it takes six of us to do work that used to take nine people. That saves us a lot of money – it has really saved our bacon.”

Find out more on www.esf2013.com

“INDIVIDUAL FEEDING ENSURES MORE CONSISTENT LITTERS”

Sow farmer Benjamin Kastner (DE)

“Individual feeding was our main reason for choosing Nedap ESF feeding stations”, says Kastner.

Find out more on www.esf2013.com

On page 2 you will read more about sow farmers' experiences with feeding stations.

 **nedap**
technology that matters

HIGHLIGHTS



Cases: pig farmers

Pig farmers who have faced the same choices as you are facing now. Read about their experiences with feeding stations.



In practice

A typical week in a shed with feeding stations: the jobs and the time they take.



Experts

The experts give their verdict on group housing with feeding stations based on their own specialisms and experience.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

For in-depth information, pictures and videos on feeding stations, visit:
www.esf2013.com



“THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES”

Pig Farmer Roger Cuijpers (NL)



Who: Pig farmer Roger Cuijpers
Where: Maria Hoop, Limburg, the Netherlands

One of the first things Roger Cuijpers of Maria-Hoop (Limburg) did when he took over his parents' sow farm in 2006 was to build a new sow shed. That meant expanding from 180 to 350 sows, but also switching to group housing.

Cuijpers decided to keep the sows in a large group with Nedap feeding stations. "It was an easy decision. It appealed to me

for welfare and image reasons, and also because it is so convenient to work with."

One large group

Convenience is a top priority for Cuijpers. So he opted for one large group. The sows join the group immediately after covering. "That always works well, as the sows know each other. The percentage of sows returning to oestrus is about 6%, that says it all." The gilts first join the group before insemination to give them a chance to get used to it, after it was found that joining the group after insemination did not work. "You have to find out these things for yourself, so it does take a bit of getting used to."



Cuijpers in his sow shed

Smooth switch-over

Nevertheless, the switch-over went better than Cuijpers had expected. "Everything is going to plan. In fact, even better: I thought the sows would fight more. It does happen occasionally, but the group is generally very calm." The sows rest for a large part of the day. At about 5 pm the feeding stations start a new cycle and the group starts moving. Cuijpers has five Nedap feeding stations in his shed. "We could probably have managed with four, but too little capacity causes unrest and you immediately run into trouble if one goes wrong."

Automation

There have been very few technical problems up to now. "I see automation as a very positive thing. I now have twice as many sows as I did at first; this could not have happened without the feeding stations and the heat detection. It saves me a lot of time." Cuijpers now has more time for other things, both on and off the farm. "It only takes me half an hour to run my morning checks. Then I have time to have breakfast with the children, and I can spend the rest of the day in the farrowing house and the insemination area. That's where it all happens, after all."

Technical result

And that is paying off. With the new sow shed and a new insemination area, the number of weaned piglets per sow rose from 24.5 to 29, and the percentage of sows returning to oestrus was halved. "There's more space, and it should be possible to wean 30 piglets. That proves to me that a group can work well. You have to make it pay, and if it works properly you get more pleasure from your work too."

PIG FARMERS WHO HAVE FACED THE SAME CHOICES AS YOU ARE FACING NOW

We spoke to some pig farmers who have faced the same choices as you are facing at the moment. They also grappled with questions and concerns, and ultimately they opted for feeding stations. They share their experiences here and on the website www.esf2013.com.



“OUR STAFF ENJOY THEIR WORK AND REALLY FEEL THAT THEY ARE WORKING AMONG THE ANIMALS”

Entrepreneurs Diederik Nijenhuis and Jack Claessens of Agri Rozendaal (NL)
Find out more on www.esf2013.com



IMPROVING TECHNICAL RESULTS WITH ESF AND GOOD MANAGEMENT

Claus and Janny Pedersen, owners of Mariessminde pig farm (DK)

"This is the best solution for us, and it's also the cheapest way of keeping sows in groups. We lose very few sows and they rarely abort," says Janny.
Find out more on www.esf2013.com



PEACE AND QUIET IN A GROUP OF SOWS IN IDEAL CONDITIONS

Pig farmer Rostislav Novotný of the AGRA Březnice u Bechyně cooperative in Southern Bohemia (CZ)
Find out more on www.esf2013.com

See also www.esf2013.com

WHY A FEEDING STATION?

THE SEVEN MOST WIDELY HEARD ADVANTAGES OF A FEEDING STATION

1 MORE EFFICIENT AND MORE EFFECTIVE FARM MANAGEMENT

Group housing with feeding stations is about the animal's needs as well as the farmer's. Shed automation plays a major role in this. It enables you to work more efficiently and more effectively. The feeding station feeds your sows, giving you the time to spend on those animals that really need it.

extra attention because she is on heat, is not eating properly or has lost an ear tag.

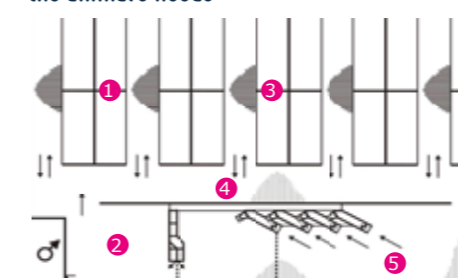


System overview helps you control and manage your farm

2 PEACE AND QUIET IN THE GROUP

Our clever shed layout, which consists of group housing with feeding stations, allows plenty of space for the animals. Sleeping, eating, drinking, defecating, urinating and playing: there is a dedicated area for all activities. The group housing system offers plenty of space to retreat and sleep. And your sows can feed in the feeding station without disturbing your pigs. In short: your sows will have all the freedom of movement they need to exercise their natural behaviour – the perfect prerequisite for peace and quiet in the shed.

The different functions of the shed in relation to the animal's needs



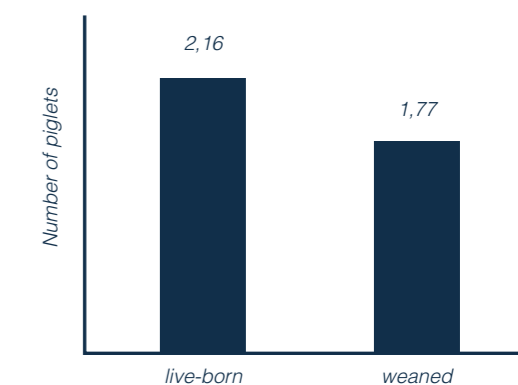
- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1 Lying area | 3 Lying area |
| 2 Drinking | 4 Activity space |
| Defecating | 5 Feeding |
| Urinating | |
| Heat detection | |

3 EASIER TO MANAGE

In sheds with feeding stations, the system gives you the right amount of support and the oversight you need to be able to control and manage your farm. It enables you to dramatically reduce the number of errors. The system gives you targeted alerts when your sows are behaving differently or something is happening in the shed. So you can respond immediately to a sow that needs

6 BETTER TECHNICAL RESULTS

Surveys of different types of pig farms that have switched to group housing with feeding stations over the years show vastly improved operating results: pregnant sows in better condition and more piglets. Building a pig shed with feeding stations will cost you no more than a traditional system. These are not empty promises but proven results.



Deviation in production of number of live-born and weaned piglets on a sample mean of farms with ESF compared with a sample mean of 1000 farms without ESF.

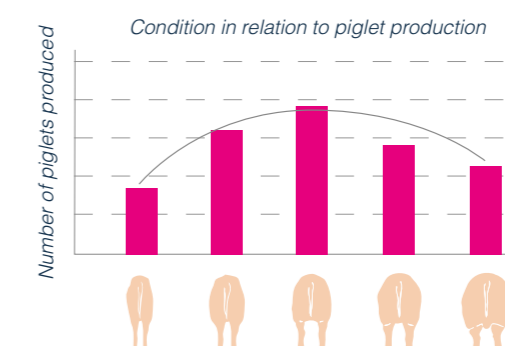
4 BETTER IMAGE

The legislation that will come into force in 2013 has come about partly through public demand for animal welfare and transparency. As a shed system, the feeding station meets this demand. The public can see for themselves that your sows are being kept in humane conditions and that they are able to display their natural behaviour.

5 INDIVIDUAL FEEDING

Although the sows are housed in a group, the basic principle of the feeding station is that each sow is fed individually. The feeding station guarantees the position of the individual pig in the group. The system makes sure your sows are and remain in tip top condition. So you can be sure you are optimising your production and using your feed as effectively as possible.

The graph below clearly illustrates how important careful individual feeding is. The impact on the sows' condition is crucial.



7 NEDAP: INNOVATIVE AND RELIABLE

The large numbers of pig farmers who have already switched to electronic sow feeding are living proof. Because ESF technology has been thoroughly tested in practice, you are assured of maximum reliability when you take your farm towards 2013. Nedap technology is state-of-the-art and always works. Year after year – without you having to lift a finger. Behind this technology is a powerful, international knowledge enterprise.

For more information, visit www.esf2013.com



IN PRACTICE: GROUP HOUSING WITH FEEDING STATIONS

Pig farmers Hennie and Yvonne Smeenk (NL)



Who: Hennie and Yvonne Smeenk
Where: Haarle, Overijssel (NL)

Group housing with feeding stations – how does this work in practice? What is a typical week in a shed with feeding stations? What work has to be done in and around the shed, and how long does it all take? Pig farmer Hennie Smeenk takes us round his farm and shows us their main weekly jobs.

Day: whole week
Time: 24/7 (automatic)
Place: gestation shed



In the sow shed the feeding station dispenses the right amount of feed according to the pregnancy stage.

Day: Monday to Friday
Time: 07:00
Place: office



A routine start to the day: the Velos system shows whether there are any sows that have not eaten or have eaten too little. They then spend an hour a day on average in the sow shed, doing vaccinations and checking sows that are not eating, for example.

Day: Monday to Friday
Time: morning, max. 1 hour



Check all sheds, e.g. for sows that are not eating. The V-scan is a useful tool for this in the group housing. It enables the farmer to call up data on individual animals by scanning their ear tags.

Day: Monday to Wednesday
Time: 10 minutes a day
Action: turning the fence



"The most important feeding station," according to Smeenk. Before gilts are inseminated, they first have to learn how the feeding station works. The station is in teaching mode at this point. All the gilts are placed on the entrance side of the feeding station. The station dispenses feed. Hunger makes the gilts enter the feeding station. At the end of the day, the gilts are on the other side. Any gilts that don't yet understand the system are given a helping hand. The amount of feed in the teaching station is constantly increased. Within 2-3 days, all the gilts know how the system works.

Day: Monday
Time: morning



Newborn piglets are injected with an iron solution. The piglets are numbered at the same time: males are given a blue ear tag, females a yellow tag, and males with one testicle a red tag. Later the gilts are given a special ear tag with which the feeding station can identify them.

Day: Wednesday
Time: during the morning
Place: insemination area



A boar is used to detect sows in heat. All sows and gilts being inseminated in one week enter the sow shed in a group. Smeenk decided to keep stable groups. This enables him to vaccinate a whole group in one go during the weekly vaccination.

Day: 1x every 115 days
Place: farrowing shed



After 115 days the pregnant gilts and sows are taken to the farrowing shed.

Day: Friday
Time: 16:00



End of the working week. All the dirty overalls are gathered up. For hygiene reasons, Smeenk uses one colour workwear and footwear per shed: yellow for weaned piglets, blue for the farrowing shed and green for the sow shed. This means changing between shed visits.

See also www.esf2013.com

"ANIMALS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE PEOPLE-FRIENDLY"

Anita Hoofs, researcher, Wageningen University (NL)



Who: Researcher Anita Hoofs
Where: Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Sow farmers who switch enthusiastically from individual housing to group housing generally get more pleasure from their work. That aspect is often neglected, says researcher Anita Hoofs of Wageningen UR Livestock Research. Anita has many years of experience in group housing systems for sows.

"With feeding stations you get in among the animals more. They become more used to people, so they are easier to handle. This extra contact makes the animals more people-friendly."

However, group housing requires an entirely different way of working, says Hoofs. "You'll spend the first year or so finding your feet. That can impact on your technical results." Experience shows that after the settling-in period, the results are just as good, if not better, if sow farmers know how to make the most of the system's specific advantages. "You can improve the efficiency of your work. In feeding stations, feeding is automated and it is much easier to control feed intake. Electronic animal identification means less paperwork. Another major benefit is that sows, particularly those in large groups, get more exercise. That is good for their legs."



Future enhancements of the technology will produce even more opportunities. Hoofs mentions possible future developments such as automatic weighing of sows, localisation of sows in the shed, or measuring sows' activity with a pedometer. "We need to keep innovating. So that we can maintain our advantage over our competitors. Standing still means going backwards."

Farmers also like the fact that group housing has a good public image. "The public respect you more as a sow farmer. I think that's very important too. You can say 'I am a sow farmer!' with even more pride."



THE EXPERTS

We spoke to some experts who each talk about their own experiences with feeding stations here and on the website www.esf2013.com.

"FEEL-GOOD FACTOR IS VERY IMPORTANT"

Maarten Rooijackers, viewing shed owner (NL)



"Visitors to our viewing shed react very positively," says Maarten Rooijackers. "Large groups on straw: that feels right. It's an emotion thing. You can rationalise it, but to some people in our society emotion is reality." Find out more on www.esf2013.com

"THE SECTOR MUST KEEP INNOVATING"

Albert Knijnenburg, Rabobank Nederland



"The fact that the sector has to switch to group housing is nothing new. We have known about this for more than 10 years. I do not see it as a threat. On the contrary: there are pig farmers who have gained very positive experience with it in many ways – for themselves and for their animals." Find out more on www.esf2013.com

"FEEDING STATIONS GOOD FOR THE SECTOR'S IMAGE"

Gijs Verschuuren, vet



Who: Gijs Verschuuren, vet
Where: South East Vets' Cooperative in Gemert, the Netherlands

Feeding stations with group housing for sows are having a positive effect on the image of pig farming in the Netherlands. Animals that can walk around freely evoke a much less negative public attitude.

According to vet Gijs Verschuuren, who works at the South East Vets' Cooperative in Gemert, North Brabant, feeding stations result in the sows making fewer compulsive movements and allow them to determine their own lying and eating behaviour. "That is good for the animals and good for the image of sow farming," he says. He predicts that the use of stalls in group housing will provoke a great deal of discussion in the future.

Like every system, the feeding station has its own specific constraints. The animals have to get used to it, for example, and the transition from young animals to sows requires extra attention from the farmer. A risk with this system is that the group of sows will become too big, causing weaker animals to lose out. But Verschuuren is generally positive about feeding stations.

If the sow farmer is well organised, the system will run well from a technical point of view. It monitors heat, disease and feed intake very efficiently. It also makes it easy to select sows for vaccinations and scans. Pig farmers for whom individual feeding is important can also easily add a feeding station.

NEDAP VELOS ESF

In a group housing system with feeding stations, you don't take the feed to the pigs, the pigs go to the feed by themselves. In the feeding station they can eat exactly the right amount at exactly the right time, easily and safely. This saves you time and energy – and you'll use the feed more effectively too. And that benefits your bottom line. It also allows the sow complete freedom of movement.

Nedap Velos ESF

Efficient management is essential for the future of pig farming. Which is why Nedap developed Velos. A control system specially developed with and for pig farmers. This system can be combined with an ESF, a Separation Unit and Heat Detection.

Individual feeding

Nedap Velos ESF is based on individual feeding – in the most efficient and effective way. Managing feeding impacts on many other things. Feed represents up to 35% of allocated costs on a sow farm. What's more, feed is the key to managing your sows' condition. So making the feeding process manageable has a direct and positive impact on your farm's results.

Velos ESF is versatile

- Identifies sows, calculates the amount of feed and its composition and dispenses the feed automatically;
- Matches the feed volumes to the gestation phase, the sow's condition, the seasons and the sow's feeding capacity;
- Reports back whether the sow has eaten her feed;
- Automatically adds water to aid feed consumption;
- Does not require repeated entry of predictable events, but requests confirmation of recorded facts;
- Works on the basis of the generic settings that enable all pigs to be managed right up to the individual level.

Velos ESF is creditable:

- Feed represents up to 35% of allocated costs on a sow farm;
- Feed is the tool for managing the sow's condition;
- The sow's condition has a major impact on production results;
- Feed consumption is an important indicator of the sow's health.

Velos ESF is friendly:

- The system is simply designed and can be used anywhere;
- It is user-friendly and anyone can learn to operate it quickly;
- The system is animal-friendly: the pigs are separated off from the group during feeding so that they can eat in peace;
- It dispenses feed at a speed synchronised to the individual animal, so it doesn't eat too much at once or become restless.

Want to find out more? We have created a special website where you'll find everything there is to know about group housing systems with feeding stations. Visit www.esf2013.com for more interviews, videos and a photo diary.

DEALERS

Interested in Nedap Velos ESF? Below you'll find a list of dealers near you or visit www.nedap-velos.com for a complete overview of our dealers. They will be happy to provide you with more information and advice.

Jenisy's (Contracts) Ltd.

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