



# Pedigree Breeding

**Selecting the next  
generation**



# Pedigree Breeding

As a pedigree breeder you are taking on a serious responsibility - selecting the next generation of breeding stock for your breed. Pedigree breeders have been passing on good quality breeding stock to the next generation of pig keepers since 1884, helping to ensure the survival of our native breeds. A certificate of registration in the herdbook is not just a piece of paper to hand over when you sell the pig. It is a statement that you have taken every care to ensure that this pig is good enough to be the next link in a chain that goes back for more than 125 years.

Pedigree registration is a two stage process. All the pigs in a litter must be identified with an ear number within 8 weeks of birth or before they are mixed with pigs from other litters. In practice this means before they are weaned. The birth notification must be received by the BPA within 10 weeks of the date of birth. Even if you are only keeping pigs for meat production it is important that all litters are birth notified and that all the pigs in each litter are birth notified. This information forms an important part of the breeding record for the sire and the dam. It is used to calculate breeding values not only for these pigs but also for all their relatives in other herds. This information forms part of national breeding programmes that help to conserve our native breeds.

All birth notified pigs are eligible for registration in the herdbook as breeding animals provided that they meet the individual breed standard for their breed. It is not always possible to tell which pigs will be suitable for breeding at weaning. That is why we have a two stage process. Only the breeder can herdbook register a pig from one of his birth notified litters. If you sell a birth notified pig for fattening the new owner cannot register it without your permission. Normal practice is to herdbook register pigs when they are selected or sold as breeding stock. You should not register pigs until you are sure that they meet the breed standard.

## Respect the Breed Standard

Each breed has its own Breed Standard which is kept under review by the elected breed representatives. The latest version is always available from the BPA website or the office. If you have any questions about the breed standard you should contact your breed representative. They will be happy to talk it over with you and explain any of the terms used.

The breed standard defines your breed. You must respect it. It is unusual for every pig in a litter to be good enough

for breeding. Do not register pigs for breeding which do not meet the breed standard. The BPA carries out herd inspections from time to time. Pigs which do not meet the standard, along with all their herdbook registered progeny, may be removed the herdbook and downgraded to a supplementary register of pedigree pigs not suitable for breeding.

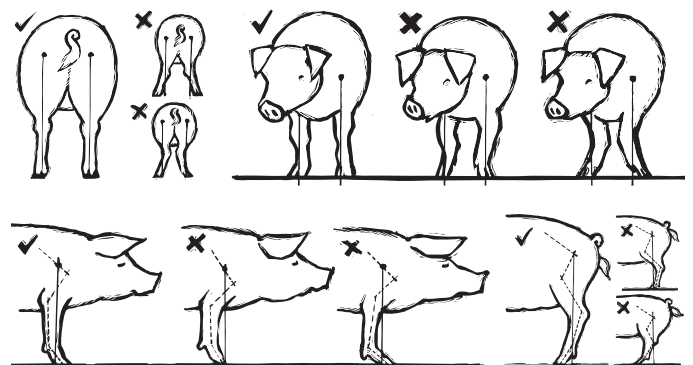


## Select sound breeding pigs

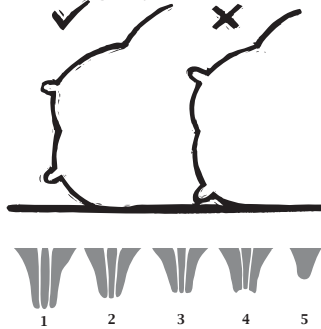
As well as meeting the breed standard pigs selected for breeding must be fit for purpose.

A breeding pig must have good legs and feet. Take time to look at the legs and feet of each pig from all angles. Don't try and select pigs in deep straw or mud where you can't see their feet properly. Strong sound legs and feet are essential if your breeding pig is to enjoy a long and productive life.

Breeding pigs must have good teats. The minimum number of teats varies according to the breed standard but shape and placement of the teats is equally important for all breeds and applies to boars just as much as it does for gilts as teat numbers and quality are passed on from one generation to the next.



The sow must be able to feed ALL her piglets. Teats should be evenly spaced along the sows belly. If some teats are too close together there will not be room for piglets to suckle side by side. Teats should not be too high up on the sows belly otherwise when she lies down the lower tier will be inaccessible (see right).



Information from the Pig Site www.thepigsite.com

A basic understanding of the anatomy of the teat is helpful if good functional ones are to be selected and their conformation can be classified from 1 to 5. The perfect teat is elongated and pointed with two teat canals opening to the exterior. A class 2 teat will not be so elongated but the teat end protrudes well down. Class 3 is the cut-off point for selection and this is where the teat sphincter (often appearing as a black dot) can still be seen when viewed at eye level. A class 4 teat is one where the teat sphincter is not visible, in other words the teat canal is shortened resulting in an inverted teat. Such a teat should be considered non viable. A proportion of inverted teats will be drawn out by the piglet at suckling, but at least 50% of them will remain blind. Why take the risk? A class 5 teat is usually one where the teat has been rubbed off in the first 48 hours of birth.



There is no alternative but getting down there for a good look  
A mirror on a stick won't work

## Take extra care when selecting or buying in a breeding boar

When you choose a boar for your herd take extra care. Remember your boar is half your herd because he contributes half of the genetics to every piglet that he sires. Over the boars lifetime this could be hundreds even thousands of progeny.

Make sure the boar has two sound testicles.

Teats numbers and quality are passed on by the boar so make sure he meets the breed



3 pairs of teats carried in front of the prepuce is ideal

standard and aim for three pairs of teats carried in front of the prepuce.

## Avoid inbreeding

Small populations of native breeds can suffer from inbreeding. In some cases this can become a threat to the very survival of the breed. As well as selecting good breeding stock, pedigree breeders have a responsibility to maintain the genetic health of the breed. This means controlling inbreeding within your herd.

As a general rule of thumb do not mate a sow with a boar if they have any shared grandparents. Each pedigree pig has a pedigree certificate showing the paternal ancestors (Sire Line) on the top and the maternal ancestors (Dam Line) on the bottom. Pedigree pigs take their name from either the Sire or the Dam. Mating a sow with a boar that has a different name from her father is a start but you should still check both pedigrees to make sure that the same pig does not appear twice in either the sire line or the dam line.

## Look out for genetic defects

Inbreeding can cause genetic defects but these can also appear without warning.

## The most common genetic defects

There are many different congenital defects. Most are seen early in life but some may slip through the net and need to be screened for at selection. The most important are:



1. Umbilical hernia 2. scrotal hernia 3. Atresia ani (blind anus)

## Registering and Transferring Pedigree Pigs

Only birth notified pigs can be registered in the herdbook. This means that the pig's individual ear number, its date of birth and its parents have all been recorded on the BPA pedigree database within 10 weeks of birth. If you miss this deadline there is a system of fines for late notifications but this is not an open ended process. There is a cut off point after which you will need special permission from your breed representatives and they may require an inspection of your farm records. Birth notify all your litters on time!

## ■ What's in a name

When you herdbook register your pig it will receive an official pedigree name. Remember the rule:

*No Member shall sell or offer or advertise for sale a pedigree pig by name unless it has actually been registered in the Herd Book. This rule applies to any form of sale, whether by Private Treaty or by Auction, and whether under the Association's auspices, or not.*

The pig will carry your herd prefix followed by its line name – inherited from the sire of dam. The last part of the pedigree name is a number – the pedigree numeral. The default setting on the computer is to use the ear number as the pedigree numeral. If you want to use the more traditional method you should inform the office when you register your first pig.

The conventions for naming are explained in *Pedigree Breeding – The First Steps*.

## ■ Identification

All your pedigree pigs should have been identified with a unique ear number within 8 weeks of birth. Tattoos fade and ears can get torn or bitten. If you find there is a problem with the identification when you come to register the pig you must inform the BPA in writing and get written permission to retattoo or make any other changes. Remember if you rely on a single tag to identify your birth notified pigs and the tag is lost you may not be able to register the pig. Double tagged birth notified pigs must have the same number in both ears.

All herdbook registered pigs should have two recorded ID's on the database. If your pig is tattooed or notched we recommend adding an ear tag as the secondary ID at the time of registration. Tags should be preprinted with your BPA Herd Designation Letters (HDL) and your official government Herdmark. The ear tag number does not have to match the tattoo or notch. We can store two different numbers at the time of registration.

Pigs leaving your farm need to carry your official government herdmark. Pedigree pigs do not have to be given a new tag every time they move provided that you record the pig's unique ear number on the movement licence. For notched pigs this would have to be a tag number as notches are not accepted for disease control tracing.

BPA rules require all show pigs to be tattooed or notched.

Defra rules require all show pigs to be tagged.

Every registered pig should have two forms of ID recorded - one of which should be a tag showing the official herdmark and BPA HDL.



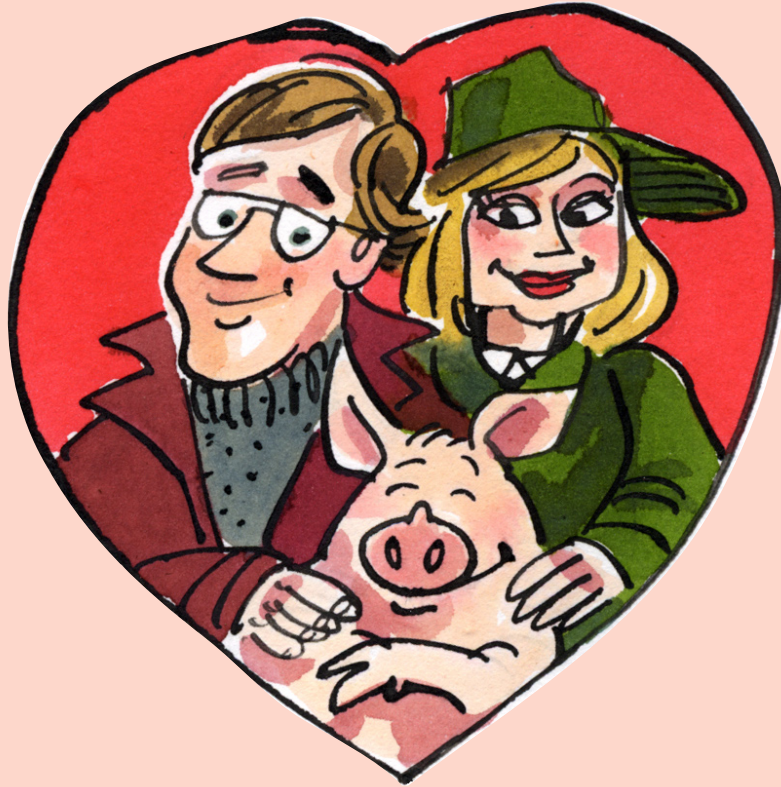
*Only pigs with the proper ID can go to the show.*

## ■ Registration or Transfer

You can register your pigs on-line or use paper forms. When you register a pig for the first time you can transfer it to a new owner at the same time free of charge. You need a registration form and you complete the second section with details of the new owner. If the pig is already registered and you are selling it on then you need a transfer form.

## ■ Checklist for Herdbook Registration

1. Is the pig birth notified
2. Is it properly identified – if extra identification is needed at the time of registration this should be included on the registration form
3. Does it meet the breed standard – if in doubt talk to your breed rep
4. Legs and feet – make sure you can see the feet and that the pig can walk freely when you are selecting.
5. Check teat numbers and quality – try to see how the teats are placed when the gilt is lying down
6. Has the boar got two testicles
7. Check for other genetic defects
8. Go back over the pedigree and make sure there are no common grandparents
9. Is this pig good enough to carry your herd prefix
10. Register your pig in the Herdbook



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Membership benefits

Pedigree Breeding

The first steps

Pedigree Breeding

Selecting the next generation

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