Advanced Open Sow Housing System

Maple Leaf Foods is committed to being a leader in animal care. Better care for our animals is one of our sustainability priorities and reflects our goal to be the most sustainable protein company on earth.

While all pigs that are raised for meat are housed in open pens, industry practice has been to confine sows (mother pigs) in confining gestation crates. At Maple Leaf Foods, we challenged ourselves to do better. We have invested in research and significant barn redesign and construction to convert all of our sows to open housing. To date, we have moved more than 50 per cent of our sows to our Advanced Open Sow Housing system where they are free to roam, feed and socialize. We are on track to complete this transition by the end of 2021.

Legend

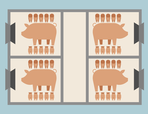
SOW (MOTHER PIG) · PIGLET · ENCLOSURE · FEEDER · ELECTRONIC SOW FEEDER

Conventional Sow Housing System

The majority of the industry in Canada and US applies this conventional system for their breeding practices.

The Sow Experience:

- Lifetime of total confinement
- Cannot turn around
- No opportunity to exercise
- No socializing with other sows
- More prone to injury due to lack of movement
- Limited interaction with caregivers



Farrowing Stage

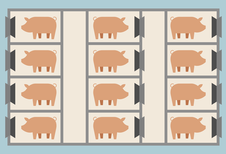
21 DAYS

Sows housed in stalls to birth and nurse their piglets.

Breeding Stage

42 DAYS

Sows housed in stalls to be inseminated and confirmed pregnant.



Gestation Stage

78 DAYS

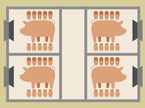
Pregnant sows housed in stalls until ready to give birth.

Loose Sow Housing System

A small percentage of the industry in Canada and US have adopted a system that allows sows more movement during pregnancy. Sows are still housed in stalls during the farrowing and breeding stages.

The Sow Experience:

- Confined in stalls during farrowing, breeding and early stage of pregnancy
- Opportunity to exercise and socialize



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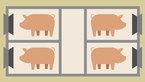

Breeding Stage

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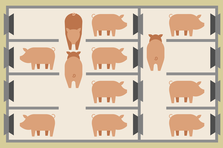


Gestation Stage Example

78 DAYS

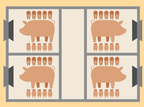
The above is an example of a free access stall which allows pregnant sows the option to back out of stall and socialize. Animal behaviour often limits the sows willingness to take advantage of this option and exit their stall.

Maple Leaf Foods Advanced Open Sow Housing System

Our unique approach significantly lowers the time a sow spends in a breeding stall, providing 100% open housing during pregnancy in an environment where they are free to roam, feed and socialize.

The Sow Experience:

- Allows sows to explore their surroundings
- Improved well-being, health
- Improved leg, joint health due to lots of opportunity to move and exercise
- Higher social interaction amongst social group
- Reduced aggressive behaviour
- More interaction with caregivers
- Feed program tailored to each sow for her individual health
- Cool water misters for sows during summer



Farrowing Stage

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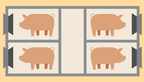
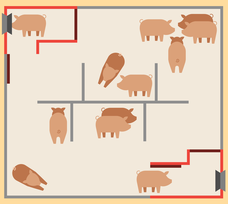


Breeding Stage

7-9 DAYS

Sows are bred in individual stalls for their own safety and wellbeing. Once pregnant, they are immediately returned to their social groups.



Gestation Stage

111 DAYS

Total redesign and rebuild of pen to allow sows to move and socialize. Developed a training system where sows are taught to use our Advanced Open Sow Housing system, which significantly reduces risk of aggressive behaviour. Maple Leaf Foods selected an electronic sow feeding system to further encourage movement and optimal nutrition. Free access to water on demand.

Our sustainability and animal welfare improvements:

- ELECTRONIC SOW FEEDERS
- ENRICHMENT
- ENHANCED FLOORING DESIGN
- ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY MATERIALS
- AIR SYSTEM/ VENTILATION
- LED LIGHTS
- WINDOWS FOR NATURAL LIGHT
- WATER MISTERS