



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Baby Pig Management Practices¹

K.I. Durrance and C. A. Maxson²

The procedures covered in this leaflet are usually done in the following order:

- **Day of Birth:** clip needle teeth
- **Day 1:** dock tails
- **Day 2:** castrate

Clipping needle teeth, is easy and painless when done right. The sharp teeth can cause irritation to the sow's teats, resulting in refusal to allow nursing. Also, pigs may injure each other playing or fighting. You may want to leave the teeth of runts, which need every advantage to compete against stronger littermates.

Docking tails is almost necessary in confinement operations. Boredom may cause pigs to bite at anything that catches their eyes, including other pigs' tails. This may lead to infection and perhaps death- When done early, the cartilage has not had time to harden and the operation is easier with less bleeding.

Giving iron shots is an art. Most people are never 100% accurate; ie. little or no backflow of the compound, but following the procedure outlined may improve your chances. The advantage to injections over other methods of adding iron is that you are sure each pig has received an adequate amount of iron. It is recommended the shot be given in the neck to avoid damage to the higher-priced ham.

Early castration is the final procedure illustrated. This practice is becoming more popular for several reasons:

- 1) One person can perform the operation alone.
- 2) There is less stress on the animal, less bleeding and less tissue damage because the cord is still, weak.
- 3) Deaths due to hernias are fewer in little pigs.
- 4) A young pig heals faster and cleaner than an older one.

There are some disadvantages:

- 5) If pigs are weak the extra stress may be too much.
- 6) If pigs start to scour before healed, there may be infection.
- 7) You may miss one testicle that has not descended yet. In such case, make a note and check again when the pig is ten days to two weeks old.

1. This document is Fact Sheet AS 17, one of a series of the Department of Animal Science, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Published: April 1980. Reviewed: May 1997. Please visit the FAIRS Website at <http://hammock.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. K.L. Durrance, Professor, Extension Swine Specialist; C. A. Maxson, former student assistant, Department of Animal Science, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The use of trade names in this publication is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee or warranty of the products named, and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others of suitable composition.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean

Instruments

Instruments are displayed in figure 1.

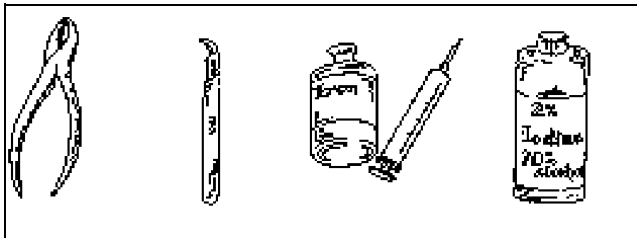


Figure 1.

Equipment Needs

Side clippers; hook scalpel; iron compound; 2% iodine/alcohol solution or iodophor like Tame Iodine; and syringe. Wash instruments in hot soapy water. Place in a quaternary ammonium compound like Sani-Squad or a similar disinfectant, during use.

Clipping Needle Teeth

Clip the eight needle teeth with the side clippers. avoid the tongue and be sure to cut above the gums to prevent bleeding and infection. (Figure 2)

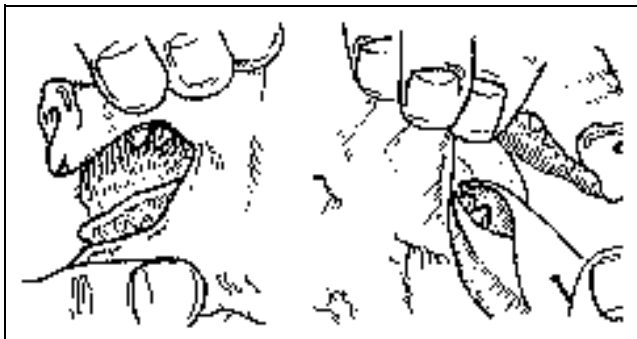


Figure 2.

Docking Tails

Side clippers are used to dock tails, too. Hold the pig by the hind feet and cut 1/2 to 1 inch from the ham. Leave a flap of skin and dip the stub in iodine. (Figure 3)

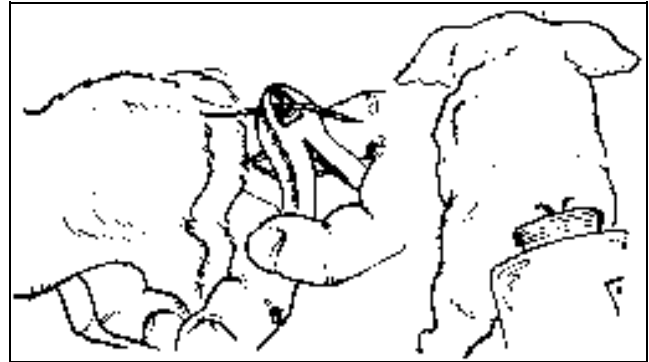


Figure 3.

Iron Injections

Iron injections are given in the neck. Be sure all air bubbles are out by holding the syringe vertically, tapping lightly and pushing the plunger. (Figure 4)

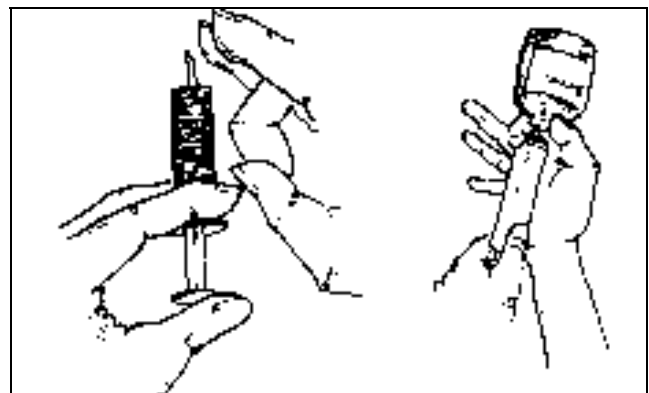


Figure 4.

Pull the skin taut by pulling the ear forward. Prick the skin, holding the syringe as shown. Pull it up, then continue into the muscle. Withdraw quickly, allowing skin to cover the site, preventing backflow. (Figure 5)

Early Castration



Figure 5.

Hold the pig by the hind feet as shown. Swab the scrotum with iodine. Push up on the testicle with the thumb. Use a size 11 blade on a #3 handle, cutting up. The lower the incision, the better the drainage. (Figure 6)



Figure 6.

Make an incision over each testicle. Push them through using pressure by the thumb. Grasp each testicle between thumb and index finger and pull until the cord breaks. Do not let the second testicle slip while removing the first. Spray with an antibiotic powder. (Figure 7)



Figure 7.