



# Reducing mounting behaviour of boars - tips and recommendations

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## Keeping boars

Managing boars (entire males) differs from managing castrates and gilts. Experiences with keeping boars differ between pig farmers. Some pig farmers observe high levels of sexual and aggressive behaviour of the boars on their farms while other farmers do not observe this behaviour. On 70 pig farms these differences in behaviour of the boars in relation to farm management were investigated. This resulted in advice for successfully keeping boars (see report on <http://edepot.wur.nl/281710>). This flyer contains tips and recommendations to reduce sexual and aggressive behaviour of boars.



*Rest periods are important*



*Mounting behaviour*

## Tips and recommendations

The tips and recommendations to reduce sexual and aggressive behaviour are based on research and on practical experiences.

### General management:

- Take the time to learn how to manage boars.
- Seek expert advice; keeping boars is different from keeping castrates and gilts.
- Care for rest in the room, also with your own behaviour. A positive, peaceful handling of the boars is important. Human-directed behaviour (less fear for humans) reduces the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour.
- Make sure that the boars are feeling comfortable. This reduces the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour. Boars are more sensitive to changes in management, feeding and climate than castrates and gilts.
- Rest and routine are important for successfully keeping boars. Factors that cause stress or give a negative stimulus increase the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour.

### Health:

- Good health of the boars is important.
- Preventive health measures, such as vaccination, reduce the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour.
- Good health contributes to a comfortable feeling of the boars and this reduces the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour. If a pig is ill, it is important to remove this pig from the pen as soon as possible. Ill boars are bothered by other boars. This also applies to pigs with leg problems.





*Contact between pens*

#### Housing and climate:

- Clean pens and pigs reduce the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour. Dirty pens and pigs can be an indication of a suboptimal climate.
- A good climate control and an optimal climate are important.
- A partly open pen wall reduces the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour. With partly open pen walls, boars can have contact with the pigs in the neighbouring pens and probably can better see what is happening in the room.
- Make sure that the floor has a good grip. This prevents leg problems.
- Do not mix boars from different pens after delivery of the first boars to the slaughter house. Mixing causes unrest because the ranking of the boars has to be established again.



*Feeding by a long trough*

#### Feeding:

- Boars should be fed ad libitum or at a high feeding level. Restricted feeding can result in competition around feeding and in a less satiated feeling.
- Sufficient eating places is important. Too few eating places can result in competition around feeding. Feeding by a long trough and less pigs per eating place reduce the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour.
- Feed boars a starter diet, a grower diet and a finisher diet so they can be fed to their amino acid requirement.
- Supply boars diets with sufficient amino acids. Feeding diets with a high level of amino acids reduce the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour. There is a large variation in the level of amino acids between diets. Discuss the diet composition with your feed advisor.
- A good hygiene of the feeding and drinking place is important. This reduces the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour. Insufficient hygiene of the feeding and drinking place may reduce the feed and water intake resulting in restless boars.
- Sufficient water supply of the drinking system is important. This reduces the risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour. Insufficient supply of drinking water may reduce the water intake of the pigs resulting in restless boars.

#### In conclusion

Successfully keeping boars is possible. The risk on sexual and aggressive behaviour is low when everything is optimal for the boars. When the farm conditions regarding feeding and drinking water, housing and climate, health of the pigs and/or management are not optimal, there is a risk that increased levels of sexual and aggressive behaviour will occur. The tips and recommendations in this flyer contribute to successfully keeping boars.