

COMMERCIAL PIGS

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They are highly sociable, sensitive, emotional and intelligent animals and studies have proven that pigs have long term memories and share many cognitive capacities with other highly intelligent species such as dogs, chimpanzees, elephants, dolphins and humans.

In the wild pigs will spend most of their time rooting and foraging in the soil but sadly intensely bred pigs cannot express any of these natural behaviours and they are provided with next to no stimulation. They are bred and reared for meat in factory farms on an enormously large scale and in 2016, it was estimated that on average 10 million pigs are slaughtered each year in the UK and 96% of these are intensively reared indoors.

The environment where the pigs are fattened for slaughter are often barren and in overcrowded pens. The pigs have no enrichment for bedding just hard, uncomfortable slatted or concrete floors. One pen can house up to 200 pigs at a time and will be no bigger than 10m by 12m. There is no access to outside sunlight or fresh air.

Lack of space and zero stimulation is a serious issue for pigs, causing boredom and frustration and results in behavioural problems such as tail biting and aggression. To prevent this from occurring the pig's tails are removed through a painful and very stressful procedure called tail docking. To reduce aggression and biting their teeth are clipped and males will be castrated. Both procedures cause great distress and are done without any anaesthetic.

Hundreds of stressed animals crammed into filthy sheds also means diseases are easily spread. Undercover investigations have



Rescued sow at Dean Farm Trust

found numerous pigs suffering in excruciating pain, unable to move and left to die. Common diseases and illnesses seen in factory farmed pigs include respiratory disease, lameness and trauma.

Sows used for breeding suffer similar if not worse conditions. As soon as they are old enough (around 6 months of age) 80-90% are artificially inseminated. They are then housed indoors with other pregnant sows for the duration of their gestation period which is 114 days. They are deprived of any natural instincts to root and build a nest and after giving birth they are imprisoned in farrowing crates, which are small 2ft wide cages, so small they are unable to turn around or lie down comfortably. They are unable to reach their piglets and will remain in these cages for up to five weeks, forced to lie in wet, faeces covered floors which often causes health problems such as ulcers and sores.

Sows will often develop abnormal behavioural problems due to intense boredom and loneliness such as chewing the air and biting the crate bars. They are naturally very protective and maternal animals and find it very distressing when their piglets are taken from them for fattening, being prematurely weaned at around 21 days old. A week later the sow will be serviced again. They will be used for breeding until they become too exhausted

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to continue or they are no longer deemed as productive and will then be sent off to slaughter usually at 3 to 4 years old. On average, a commercial breeding sows will have 10 piglets per litter and have 2-3 litters per year and at the end of their 'production period' they have had an average of 4-7 litters.

The natural life span of a pig would be between 10-15 years but factory farmed pigs reared for meat are sent off to slaughter at just 5 months old. When the time comes the pigs will be forced onto crammed trucks with no room to move, they are often terrified and will travel long journeys with little air and no food or water.

Pigs are slaughtered by entering a restraining box where they are stunned with an electric current or gassed. Research has shown that 36% of the stunning device is placed in the wrong area meaning the pigs may fail to lose consciousness and it is estimated that around 125,000 pigs a year will not be stunned because of this.

Over 2 million pigs are gassed with CO2 gas each year. This method takes pigs up to 30 seconds to lose consciousness and will squeal, hyperventilate and try to escape during the very stressful process.

After stunning or gassing their throats are cut and they are bled out. However, pigs can gain consciousness very quickly and it is estimated around one million pigs a year will regain consciousness before they die.

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