

Stocking rate and grazing management

Reduced stocking rate

Reducing the number of pigs per hectare, either by reducing the total number of pigs or by splitting pigs across paddocks, reduces the nutrients and faecal indicator outputs (FIO) deposited, which contribute to both ammonia and nitrous oxide emissions and to runoff into watercourses. Reduced stocking rate also reduces the risk of soil disturbance.

Benefits: Cost savings in purchased feed and bedding.

Barriers: May impact farm profitability (renting same land area for fewer sows can reduce the gross margin), and splitting pigs across paddocks can increase labour and land costs if additional land is required.

Landlord involvement needed: No.

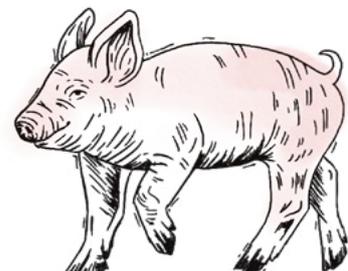
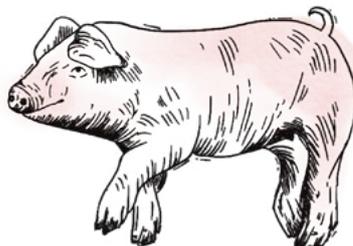
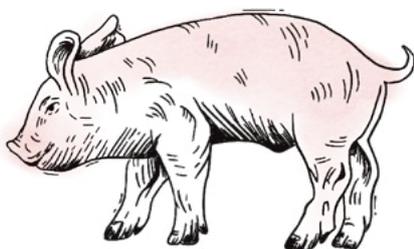
Pig welfare: Lower disease risk and less competition for space and feed.

Benefit areas

-  Water quality
-  Air quality
-  Soil quality
-  Climate

Practical Tips

- Carefully consider the impact on farm profitability.
- Adjust stocking rates based on soil type, field size, and green cover.
- Follow welfare codes and risk assessments.
- Reducing stocking rates will likely require support from the supply chain.



Rotational grazing

Moving pigs between paddocks or sections allows the ground to recover and reduces the volume and mixing of manure and urine, which produce nitrous oxide and ammonia emissions. Soil compaction is also reduced, and vegetation is given the opportunity to re-grow, which can reduce nutrient runoff and faecal indicator organisms (FIO).

Benefits: Improves soil health, supports grass regrowth, and benefits future crop production.

Barriers: Requires extra time, labour, fencing, and infrastructure; land availability can be limiting.

Landlord involvement needed: Yes.

Pig welfare: Provides fresh and consistent areas for grazing and rooting, which encourage natural behaviours. Rotational grazing reduces mud and disease risk.

Benefit areas



Practical Tips

- Plan the layout based on land size, soil type, and proximity to watercourses and protected sites.
- Allow grass recovery before moving pigs.
- Owning/renting additional acreage will support grass establishment to support rotation.
- Stay flexible to account for weather changes.



Use our simple Excel tool and guidance manual to assess the economic impact of introducing some of these options on your outdoor pig unit.

