

RSPCA Assured introduces new welfare standards for pigs

The new standards feature important changes to continually progress pig welfare

Monday 3 March 2025

RSPCA Assured has today published new RSPCA welfare standards for pigs to help further improve their welfare.

The standards came into effect as of 3 March 2025, but a few of the changes will come into effect next year - on Tuesday 3 March 2026 - to allow farms enough time to make any adjustments.

RSPCA Assured assistant director of certification Neil Scott said: "We hugely value our members' commitment to the RSPCA Assured scheme - and they should be incredibly proud of the improvements they're making to pig welfare by meeting the new standards. Our RSPCA Assured members have been helping us to improve the lives of pigs since 1994 - when the RSPCA welfare standards were first published.



"If any of our members have questions about the standards or need further advice, please [get in touch](#) with our farming and technical engagement team and we'll do everything we can to help."

RSPCA Assured members were notified of the changes to the standards on Monday 2 December 2024.

[The new standards](#) include:

- The use of off-site lairaging facilities must not be used as an extension of the

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- abattoirs' on-site lairage¹. Off-site lairages may only be used in emergency situations
- A prohibition on the use of equipment that is designed to rear surplus piglets, except in emergency situations to protect the welfare of sick piglets. An example of this type of equipment is a rescue deck - a box with a milk line system - where piglets from very large litters are typically placed with the idea of reducing competition for their mothers' milk
 - The introduction of split-sexing of male and female pigs² by the time they reach an average live weight of 50kg. This has been reduced from 110kg in the current version of the standards. This is an important change because females in mixed-sex groups are frequently subjected to aggression and mounting by males (must be met by 3 March 2026)
 - Cull sows and boars³ must be transported according to the RSPCA's transport standards - and by an RSPCA Assured-approved haulier. They must also be slaughtered according to the RSPCA's slaughter standards at an RSPCA Assured-approved abattoir (must be met by 3 March 2026).



The RSPCA welfare standards are continually improved and progressed using the latest scientific research, robust well-considered evidence and practical farming experience. During this process, the RSPCA consults other animal welfare and agricultural scientists, veterinary surgeons, retailers and farming industry representatives to ensure the standards continue to be at the forefront of farm animal care and welfare, whilst also being achievable on commercial farms.

RSPCA Assured has launched a brand new online pig hub to support its members with meeting the new standards. The hub includes useful Q&A's, tips on enrichment, a pig fact file, an [audio download](#) to listen to the standards updates on the go, guidance on the standards and more. [You can find the pig hub here.](#)

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Notes to editors

1. Lairage is a holding pen where pigs are kept when they arrive at the abattoir and off-site lairage is a holding pen further away from the abattoir to which pigs have to be transported.
2. Split-sexing is where male and female pigs are kept in separate pens.
3. Cull sows and boars are breeding animals going for slaughter.

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