



Researcher working with a producer.
Source: Doug Richards, Prairie Swine Centre

Comprehensive and reliable information from 12 different farms with group sow housing is now available online at www.groupsowhousing.com. The project documents a wide range of herd sizes and renovation budgets, providing Canadian producers with pictures, testimonials from fellow producers, as well as other practical material about the conversion to group sow housing.

Why was this work done?

The transition from stalls to groups is gradually taking place across the country. In 2018, it was estimated that roughly 25% of the Canadian sow herd was managed using group housing. To comply with the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs (2014), it is expected that close to 100% of sows will be in group housing by 2024. This change requires major renovations to existing buildings, or replacement with new buildings, as well as significant changes to daily management. This also represents an important investment by producers. Arguably, those who have already successfully implemented group sow housing are the best resource to provide other producers with credible information on what is needed for this important transition.

What was done and what was the outcome?

This project gathered the best possible information from 12 farms where sows were housed in groups. The conversion of six barns was documented as they went through the process. Information from six sites that had already converted to group sow housing was also collected. A range of locations, feeding systems and farm sizes was sought.

The actual costs of transition reported by producers ranged from \$250 to \$500 per sow place. This was much lower than initial estimates, largely because producers did much of the work themselves and kept existing floors, feed lines, electrical and ventilation systems.

National sow housing conversion project

► Jennifer Brown, Prairie Swine Centre

Project Status: Completed in 2018



ESF feeders.
Source: Doug Richards,
Prairie Swine Centre



Sows using environmental enrichment at Hog-Tied Farms.
Source: Doug Richards,
Prairie Swine Centre

Electronic Sow Feeders (ESF) and free-access ESF were the most common feeding systems used by the farms studied. In addition, two of the farms used competitive feeding systems. While individual feeding systems such as ESF systems may have a higher initial capital cost than competitive feeding, it has the long-term benefit of automatically tracking sows as well as potential feed cost and labour savings. In contrast, competitive systems have reduced initial costs for installation but require more floor space and daily management, with less flexibility to manage sows individually.

Collaborators

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Additional project information

Click on the links below for further information on this project

Links were last updated in 2022

Related websites:

- Official project website: www.groupsowhousing.com
- Videos from workshops held in Quebec - October 2017 (available in French): www.cdpq.ca/recherche-et-developpement/transfert-technologique/truies-en-groupe

Farmscape Interviews:

- [Group Size Can Influence Aggression Among Group Housed Sows](#)
- December 13, 2018
- [Feeding System Primary Consideration When Managing Sows in Loose Housing](#)
- November 30, 2018
- [Group Sow Housing Offers Opportunity to Reduce Energy Costs](#)
- October 13, 2017
- [Non-Competitive Feeding Allows Greater Range of Weight and Larger Group Size](#)
- October 5, 2017
- [Right Diets and Right Volumes Critical to Peak Sow Productivity](#)
- October 2, 2017
- [Researchers Identify Strategies For Reducing Aggression Among Group Housed Sows](#)
- September 21, 2017
- [Advanced Planning Key When Converting to Group Housing](#)
- September 14, 2017
- [Adoption of Technology Helps Improve Productivity](#)
- September 13, 2017
- [Nutrition Key to Improved Reproductive Performance and Longevity of Sows](#)
- September 6, 2017
- [Adoption of Group Housing Varies by Region](#)
- September 5, 2017
- [Access to Research Improves Decision Making When Moving to Group Sow Housing](#)
- August 24, 2017
- [Cost Key When Deciding Whether to Renovate or Rebuild from Scratch](#)
- August 22, 2017
- [Partial Renovation Popular in Converting to Group Sow Housing](#)
- August 16, 2017

Farmscape Interviews:

- [Right Facility Design Right People Key to Successful Conversion to Group Housing](#)
- February 8, 2017
- [Interest in Converting to Group Sow Housing Accelerates](#)
- November 28, 2016
- [Producer Input Invited on New Sow Housing Conversion Web Site](#)
- January 12, 2016
- [New Sow Housing Conversion Web Site Launched](#)
- January 8, 2016
- [Sow Operations Sought to Participate in Group Sow Housing Conversion Project](#)
- October 28, 2015
- [Project Aims to Provide Information to Producers Planning Conversions to Group Sow Housing](#)
- October 15, 2015
- [Sow Housing Conversion Web Site Planned for Launch Next Month](#)
- July 10, 2015
- [Sow Farms Invited to Consider Participation in National Sow Housing Conversion Project](#)
- June 26, 2015
- [Pork Producers Consider Sow Barn Conversion to Comply with New Pig Code Requirements](#)
- April 22, 2015
- [Changes to Pig Code Stimulates Increasing Interest in Sow Housing Research](#)
- April 20, 2015
- [New Web Site to Provide Information on Converting Sow Barns to Group Housing](#)
- January 23, 2015
- [Researchers Explore Options for Converting From Stall Housing to Group Housing](#)
- December 24, 2014
- [News Tools to Assist in Converting From Stall to Group Housing Expected in Early 2015](#)
- December 4, 2014
- [Training Sows Presents Biggest Challenges When Adopting ESF Systems](#)
- November 17, 2014
- [Decisions Regarding Sow Housing Conversion Vary Regionally](#)
- November 5, 2014

Additional Resources:

2017

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2016

- Algie, J. (2016) [The Loose Housing Revolution.](#) Article. *Better Pork, August 2016: pp. 6-16.*
Retrieved from: <https://www.betterfarming.com/search-betterpork-magazine-archive?page=4>

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