



Farrowing, especially for your first time is an exciting experience. It's always tempting to "help" or watch your sow farrow. If you choose to watch, please remember that Mamma goes into a protection mode and may not act as friendly toward you as she normally does. She may also be more nervous than normal and not appreciate your company at this time. If you must watch, doing so quietly from a distance may be best.



Piglets are born individually usually head first. The umbilical sac breaks and tears during this process. Sometimes they are born with the sac intact in which case it should be removed promptly if the piglet is unable to break free on its own. Umbilical sacs may also be called amniotic sacs or just sacs. There are various names used. The sacs are internally attached to the placenta. Sometimes you may see breech births or piglets born butt first. This means the piglet didn't get turned around coming into the birth canal. The sow and piglet normally handle this just fine.



Piglets head is emerging and the sac is broken. The birth can happen quickly for each piglet or it can take several minutes. Each can be different. It can be normal for the time duration to be several minutes or even close to an hour from the first to the second born and then a few others to follow quicker. They are all different and normally no cause for concern.



Piglet is taking its first breath. Umbilical sac is broken and away from nose and mouth.

You may see the sows breathing change, the top rear leg pull forward or up, and the tail twitch with contractions and pushing.



Birth is complete. Umbilical sac is naturally away from nose and mouth. The piglet will take a few breaths and begin to move around. It's natural instinct for them to move toward the sow's teats. Normally within a few short minutes the piglet is dry and has found where to nurse. Assistance is rarely needed for drying or for nursing. The struggling in their first movements is healthy and helps to expand their lungs. The first milk, colostrum, is full of good nourishment and very important for their survival.

Sometimes the sac does not tear naturally or may be too thick for the piglet to escape. Assistance may be needed at that point. This situation does not occur often, but more often than to label it as rare.

Farrowing is a natural process and the sow and piglets normally manage very well on their own. It's also a stressful time for the sow and she's very busy. If you choose to monitor the births be calm, quiet and at a distance. Let nature take its course. The sow may become agitated or aggressive with interference. It's best to watch the beauty of nature rather than to help it along.



Within minutes the piglet is dry and nursing. The sow is nursing as well as preparing for the next birth. It's important not to cause anxiety or nervousness. The sow is very busy and it should be calm and quiet around her if you choose to monitor the farrowing.

Normally sows know what they're doing and they farrow well all on their own with no assistance. This is a characteristic of Red Wattles. They rarely need help to farrow. Each farrowing of litters can be different. The entire process can happen in as little as one hour or up to several hours. Rarely is it necessary to assist and it's difficult to know if the sow is in distress or if it's part of the natural process. She may be taking a well-deserved break.

The birth canal is a sterile environment. If assistance is needed always use sterile equipment and sterilize the vulva area. Never use detergents or soaps. Piglets can defecate in the birth canal or just after birth and even a microscopic bit into the birth canal can cause serious or deadly infection to your sow which will also jeopardize your litter.

Sows have 2 horns in which the litter grows. The placentas will be expelled when birthing is complete. Sometimes it's difficult to know if both are expelled. It's best to only monitor for a while if you've chosen to watch. Each horn may have a different amount of piglets or even just one.

The sow may have a slight discharge for a few days after birth. Keep food and water nearby for her. She usually won't want to go far for the first few days. She may be thirsty or starving, or she may wait for several hours.