

Swine have a great sense of hearing and smell and use them extensively to navigate their environment. Their eyes provide an advantage to their other senses due to not having great depth perception directly in front of them but allowing them to see 310 degrees around their body. This also creates a blind spot directly in front and behind them. When moving pigs, they will actively try and keep the caretaker out of their blind spot, so it is important to work slowly and stay calm when moving pigs. (Ericka 2021.)

Proper Handling Mechanisms

Humane restraint is a popular mechanism used when performing many different tasks, such as bleeding, vaccinating, euthanasia, etc. There are many ways to restrain a pig, depending on their size. Piglets are restrained by picking them up by the hind leg above the hock and carrying them in front of the restrainer's chest, as shown in Figure 2. Do not pick them up by the ears, head, tail, or front legs, and avoid swinging the pig in the air. When releasing the piglet into its pen, make sure there are two points of contact before releasing, for example, both front feet touching the ground.

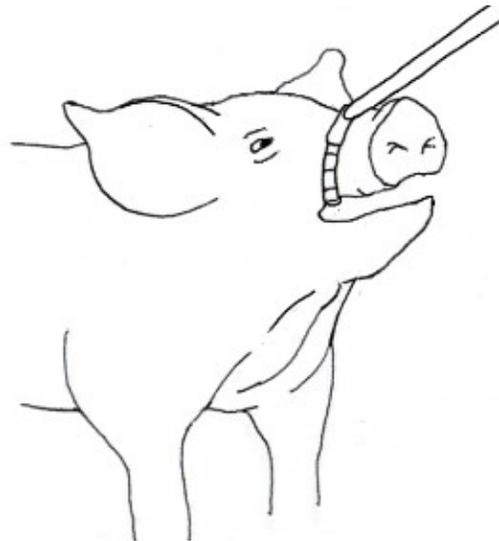
Figure 2: Small Pig Restraint.

Illustration by Mary Breuer, Swine Medicine Education Center. Funding Provided by USDA APHIS through the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program for the development of the Certified Swine Sample Collector training program.



When restraining a larger animal, a restraining snare is used as shown in Figure 3. It is important that the restrainer has had proper training with this tool for the safety of the animal and the caretaker. Remember not to restrain the pig for longer periods of time, move the pig with the snare, or tie the pig up with the snare.

*Figure 3: Large Pig Restraint by Snare
Illustration by Mary Breuer, Swine Medicine Education Center. Funding Provided by USDA APHIS through the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program for the development of the Certified Swine Sample Collector training program.*



Pigs can also be handled using noise shakers, sort boards, and general flight zone principles. When moving animals, the caretaker must be able to always control the lead animal. As the pigs get bigger, it is important to decrease the number of animals in your groups. When moving sows and boars, it is important to move animals based on their general behavior. These animals require extra precaution when handling due to their aggressive behaviors, especially with boars and sows in estrus or near farrowing.

Keep in mind that there are a few general handling tips:

- Never corner an isolated animal.
 - This could create a dangerous situation for the animal and the caretaker.
- Sows and piglets should be separated prior to handling the piglets.
 - Sows can become aggressive when their young are touched.
- Avoid sudden movements that may startle the animals.
- The back blind spot should always be avoided due to possibly causing injury to the animal or caretaker.

Relationship Between the Caretaker and the Pig

When considering pig, it is critical to understand the human-animal relationship. The caretaker must read the pig because the pigs are reading the caretaker's behavior. Often when caretakers are working pigs, it is during stressful events, such as vaccinations and weaning. So, be mindful, mitigate these negatives by spending extra time in the barns, walking calmly through chores, and employing the previous handling mechanisms. A pig will become fearful of humans after 15-30 seconds of negative activity. (Edwards, 2017.) It is important to reduce the stress factors, fearful stimuli and to balance these with positive interactions. Stressed pigs will have reduced production, and increased health challenges. Sows and gilts that are fearful will have fewer pigs born per sow and sometimes an increase in stillborn pigs. Finisher pigs that are stressed will have inferior meat quality. (Ericka 2021.)

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