



This Knowledge Notes series looks at boar management through behaviour, biology, and systems thinking — focusing on what farms often overlook, but boars never forget.

Knowledge Note 4 – One boar amplifies costs, confidence, and the stability of the whole system

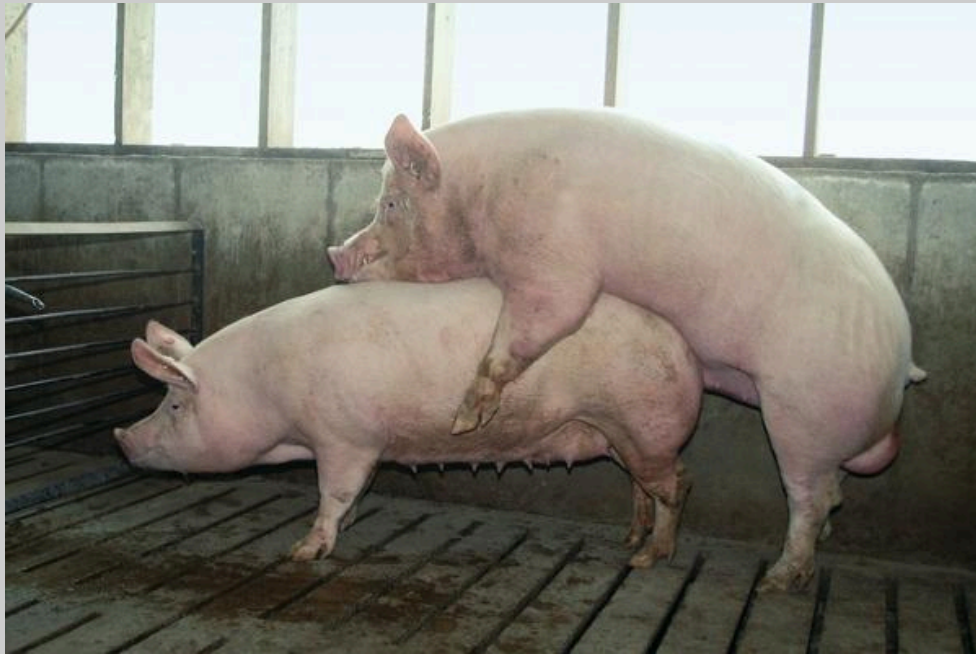


In modern pig production, **risk is concentrated most heavily in the boar**. One animal may influence hundreds or even thousands of piglets each year. As a result, every decision made around boar selection, handling, and use is amplified across the entire production system.

The most visible impact is cost. Genetic contribution from the boar plays a major role in growth efficiency and feed conversion. Even small differences in performance, when multiplied across large numbers of pigs, translate into substantial feed use and financial outcomes. Conversely, a

poorly performing boar can quietly drain efficiency over long periods without attracting immediate attention.

Less visible—but equally important—is the impact on **human confidence**. When pregnancy rates fall, litter size becomes inconsistent, or piglet quality declines, teams often begin questioning everything: feed, health programmes, sow management, protocols. In many cases, the underlying issue originates with the boar, but is not recognised early enough.



A boar engaging with the collection stool in a controlled environment. In boar management, behaviour often reflects how well the system is working.

There is also a broader system implication. Poor feed efficiency and unstable reproductive outcomes increase resource use per kilogram of pork produced. From a sustainability perspective, **boar management influences not only productivity, but also the environmental footprint of the farm**—whether this is explicitly acknowledged or not.

Crucially, boars do not create outcomes in isolation. They reflect how they are selected, prepared, handled, and understood. When boar management is consistent and respectful of biology, farms tend to experience fewer crises, clearer decision-making, and calmer teams.

Understanding the boar's role allows farms to shift from reactive problem-solving to preventive management. At that point, the boar becomes not a hidden risk, but a stabilising asset within the system.

Take home message:

A well-managed boar contributes not only to good piglets, but to stability across the entire production system.



Source note:

This Knowledge Note draws on field-based observations and system-level thinking from Dr John Carr, whose work consistently highlights how boar management shapes productivity, people, and long-term farm resilience.