

Loose housing systems for sows in Sweden: experience of legislation



Pigs shall be kept loose- regulation from 1988

1988-1989

- A new Animal Welfare Act – “natural behaviour”:
“Sows fixing systems should also be discontinued. Systems that keep animals fixed for long periods of time cannot be considered compatible with the requirement that animal husbandry must meet the animals' natural behavioral needs.”
- Animal Welfare Ordinance: *“Pigs shall be kept loose”* & *“Fixing devices for pigs may not be used other than temporarily”*.
- Animal Welfare Regulations: *“If necessary, a sow may be fixed for a maximum of one week at the time of delivery. The same applies to group-kept sows and gilts at the time of mating”*.
- Space: Sows + piglets < 2 weeks 4 m², Sows + piglets > 2 weeks 5 m²
- No financial support to the farmers, higher cost = higher prices.



Before 1988



Clarifications and changes in 1993

1993

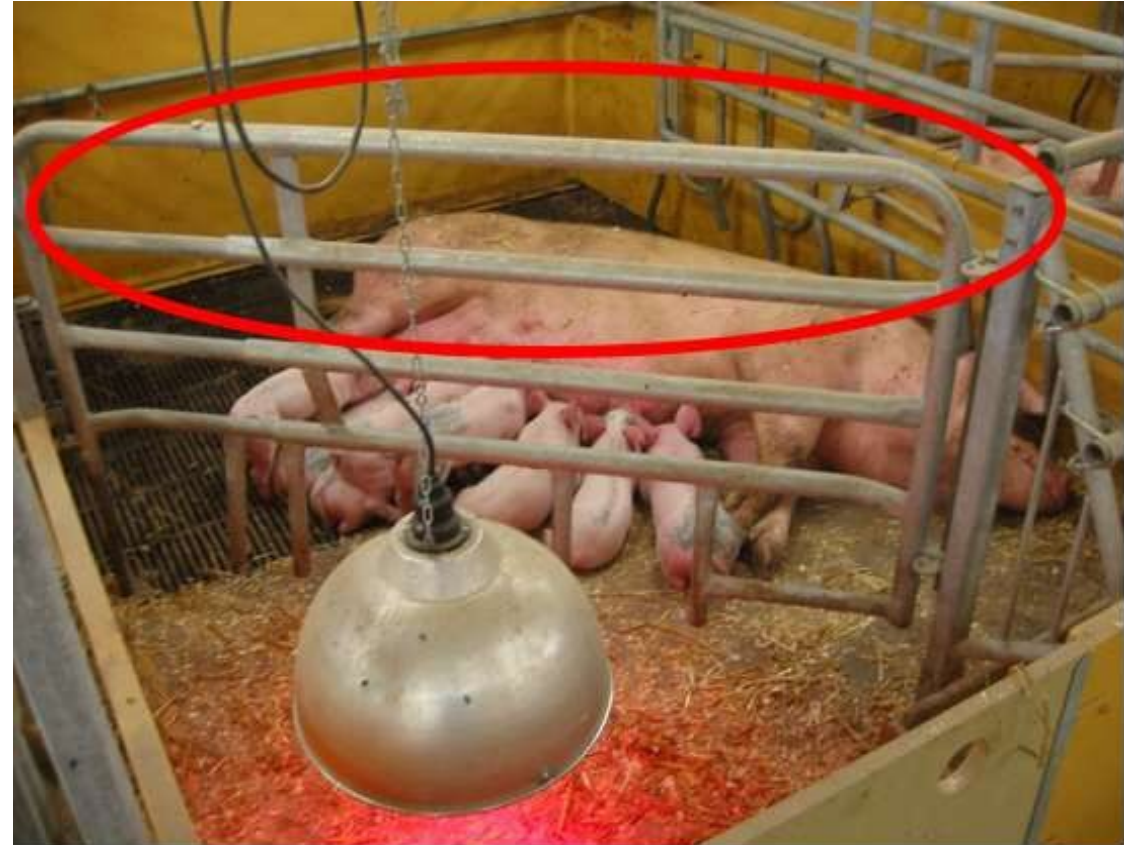
- In 1993 we changed the phrasing to make it clearer that systematic fixation was not allowed: “ If necessary, **individual** sows and gilts may be fixed for a maximum of one week at the time of delivery and at the time of mating.”
- Changed regulations regarding measurement – more space was needed in order for the systems to work.
- Space:
 - Sows + piglets < 2 weeks = 5 m² in total, 4 m² laying area.
 - Sows + piglets > 2 weeks = 6 m² in total, 5 m² laying area



Problem with space & hygiene 2003

2003

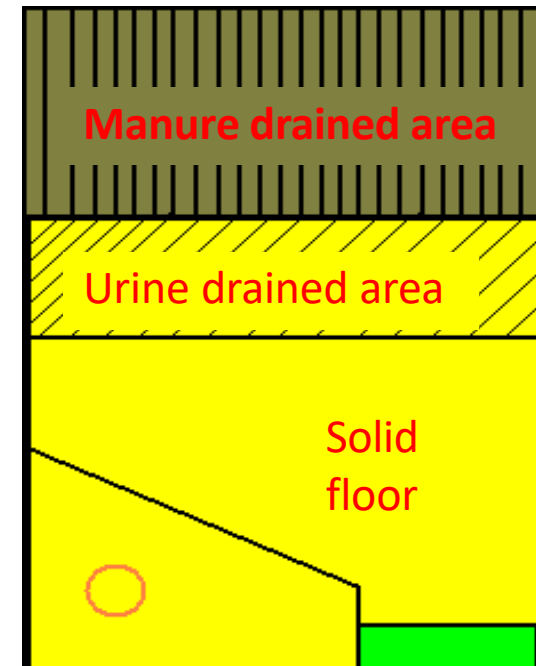
- Problems with hygiene in the boxes- need for more drained area. The laying area (solid floor) was reduced to 4 square meter.
- The fixation equipment took up to much space and did not allowing the sow enough area to move, rise up and lay down in a good way. Effected the piglets as well, were easily squeezed.
- Introduced a rule that the sow should have a 2 meter circle of free space.



Stricter rules in 2006

2006

- Removed the rule on 2 meter circle- some boxes that worked well did not have enough width for this.
- Banned the smaller box with a total area of 5 m² - did not give the sows enough space for free farrowing.
- Allowed more drained area - but $\frac{3}{4}$ of the laying area should be solid floor.
- New rule in order to make sure that sows should be able to do nesting behavior: *“Before farrowing, sows and gilts must be able to dispose of the space in one piglet box so that they can perform nesting behaviors”.*
- *“During the week before farrowing, sows and gilts must have access to litter that gives them the opportunity to perform nesting behaviors.”*

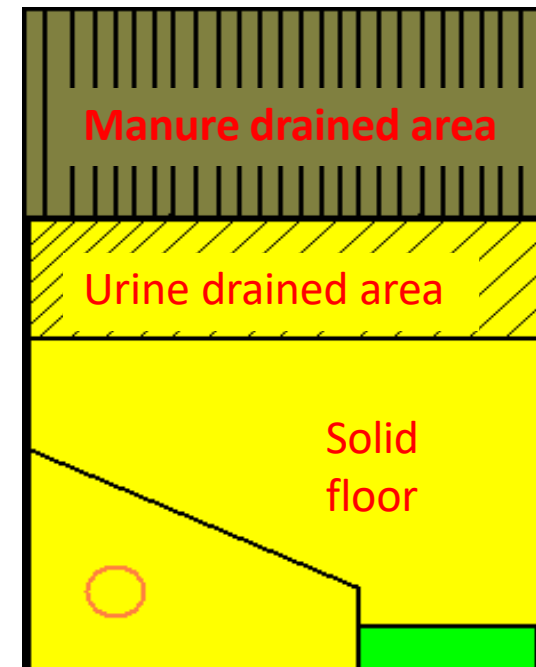


Stricter rules in 2006

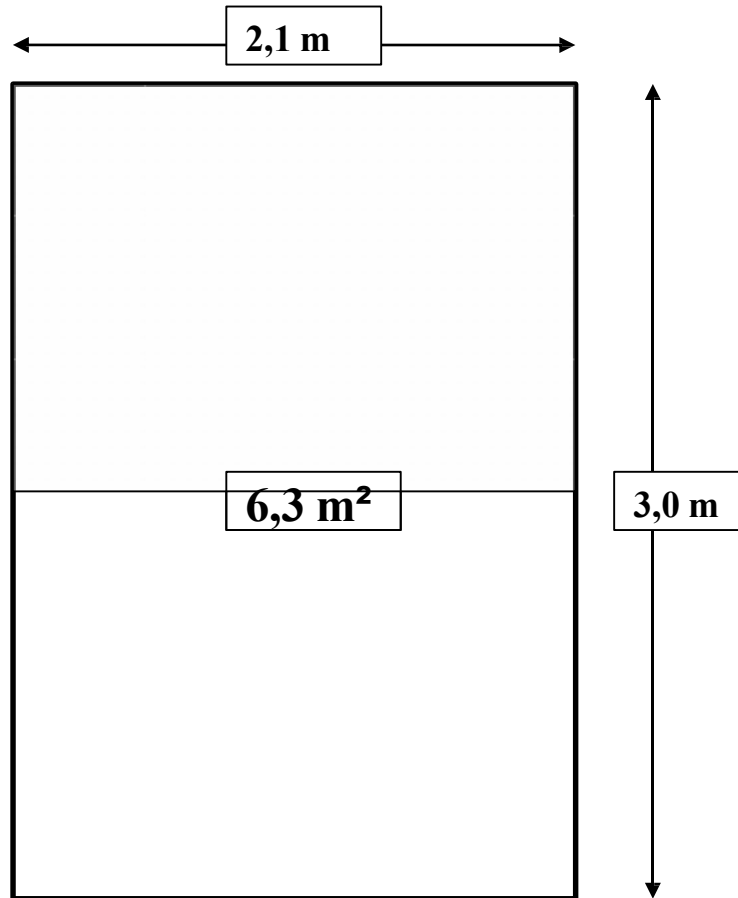
2006

Changed wording regarding fixation:

- “A lactating sow's freedom of movement may be restricted during *the piglets' first days* of life by using a protective gate or similar device *if she exhibits aggressive or abnormal behavior that constitutes an obvious risk of injury to the piglets.*”
- “A safety gate or equivalent device may also be used *under it the daily care if the sow's behavior constitutes an obvious risk of injury to the caregiver* and when the sow is handled for care and treatment”.
- “Grouped sows and gilts may be locked in stalls when they are *fed* or when they *handled for care and treatment*”.

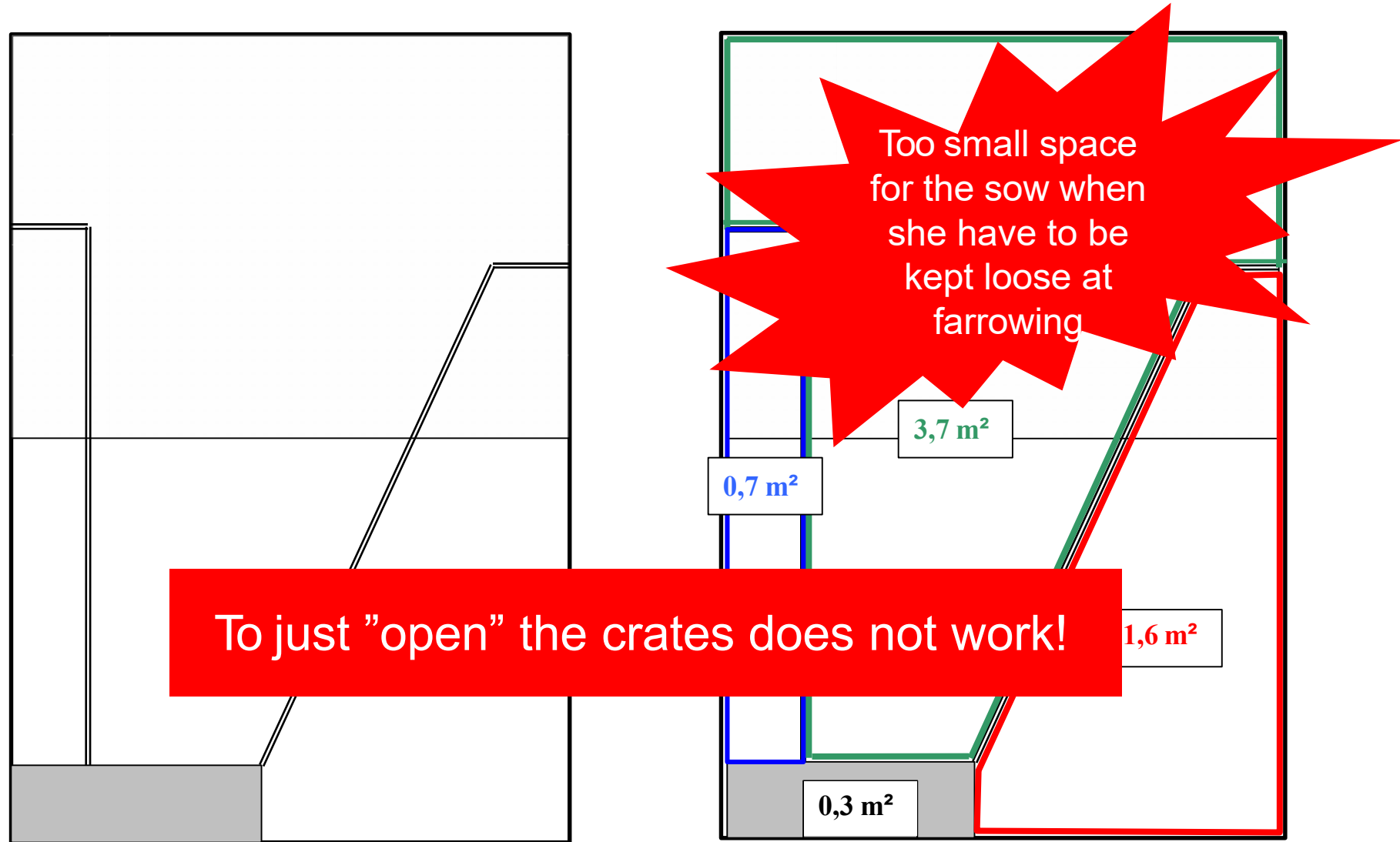


Typical dimension of Swedish conventional farrowing pen.



Current legal demand –
minimum 6m².

Pen with possibility for temporary confinement



Is this a good pen for loose housed farrowing?

No protection rails

Slurry system that can cope with straw = not pull and plug

Too small space for the sow

Long distance to piglets – stressful for the sow. Difficult to find heat for piglets

Piglet corner accessible from outside the pen

No roof – cold piglets





No protection rails

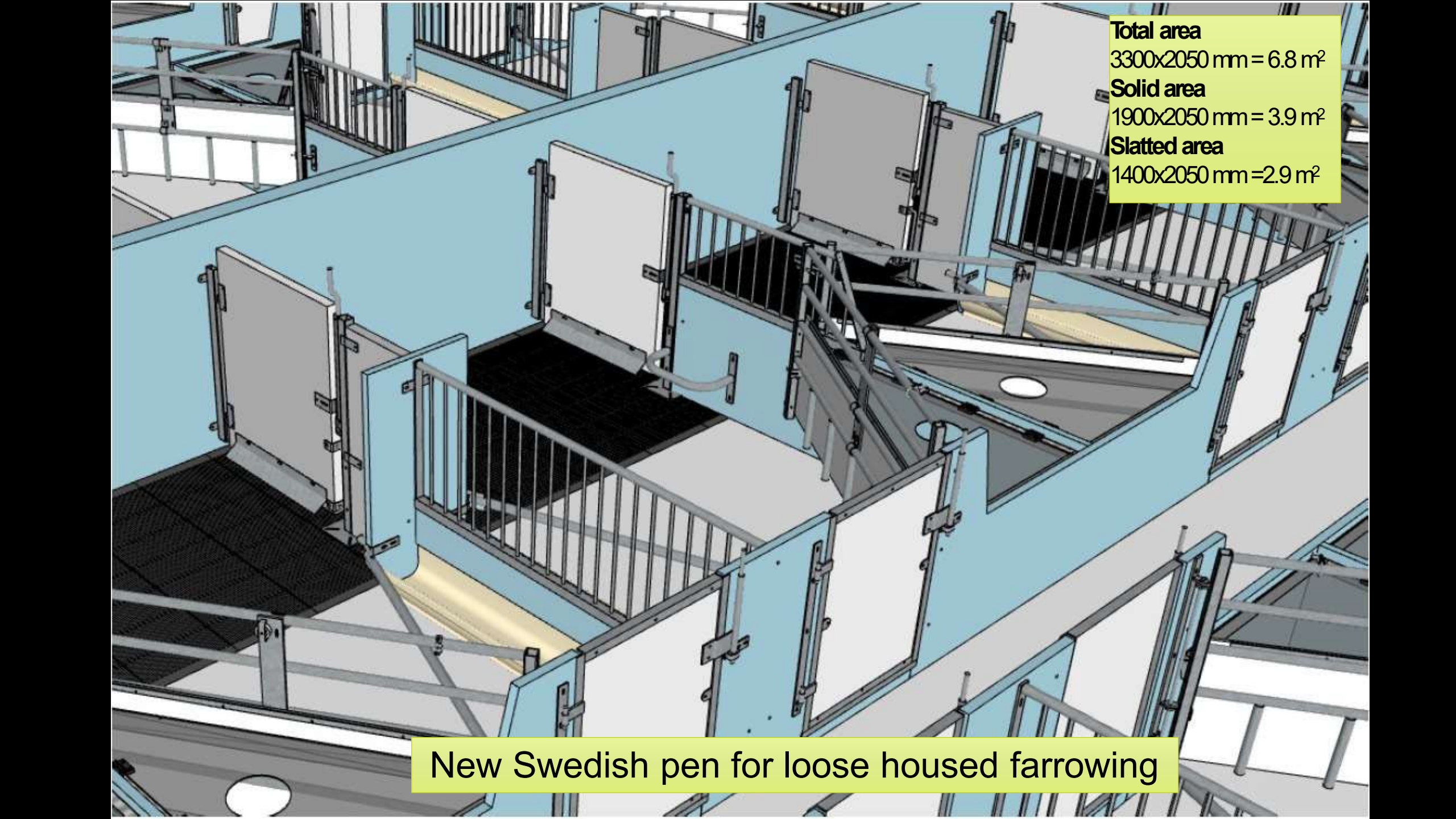
Slurry system able to cope with straw

Long distance to piglets – stressful for the sow. Difficult to find heat for piglets

Creep area at inspection gate

No roof over piglet corner



A 3D cutaway diagram of a pig pen, showing the interior and exterior structure. The pen is light blue with metal railings. The floor is dark grey with a circular opening. The walls are light blue. The pen is part of a larger structure with multiple levels and railings. The diagram is shown from an elevated perspective, looking down into the pen.

Total area
3300x2050 mm = 6.8 m²
Solid area
1900x2050 mm = 3.9 m²
Slatted area
1400x2050 mm = 2.9 m²

New Swedish pen for loose housed farrowing





Behaviour matters!

- Need good maternal abilities
- Not aggressive towards humans.
- Genetic selection is currently done in confined systems.
- Boost the sows maternal abilities by providing nest building material.

