

Pedigree Breeding

The first steps



What is Pedigree?

Pedigree is Conservation Without pedigree breeding our wonderful diversity of British pig breeds would have been lost for ever. As a pedigree breeder you will be part of one of largest and longest running conservation projects in history.

Pedigree is Traceability Most pedigree pigs can trace their family tree unbroken back over one hundred years. Pedigree gives buyers complete assurance about the provenance of the pigs or pork that they are buying.

Pedigree is Quality Pedigree breeders conform to a set of independent breed standards to ensure that the best quality pigs go on to be the parents of the next generation.

The British Pig Association was founded in 1884. The Association is the official breed society and maintains the Herdbooks for the following breeds:

Berkshire, British Landrace, British Saddleback, Duroc, Gloucestershire Old Spots, Hampshire, Large Black, Large White, Mangalitza, Middle White, Oxford Sandy & Black, Pietrain, Tamworth and Welsh.

The majority of our traditional native breeds have less than 1000 sows, which puts them at risk of extinction. One of the most important tasks of the Association is to register the birth of all pedigree litters of pigs. This is important if we are to maintain and hopefully increase the number of registered breeding pigs in each of these breeds and ensure the safety and survival of our unique genetic heritage.

The chain of pedigree registration goes right back to 1884. Piglets born to pedigree parents must be recorded if the chain is to continue. If these piglets fall out of the system it is very difficult and expensive to prove their pedigree.

By joining the BPA and registering your pigs you will be part of this important conservation project and help to preserve our national heritage of native breeds

Pedigree registration allows you to sell breeding stock for higher prices and there are significant premiums available for pedigree pork.

Pedigree is Simple Pedigree means I know who this pig is and I know who its pedigree parents are. Pedigree is all about identity and proving it.

■ The three step plan

Step one – Identify all your piglets soon after birth when you can still be sure who the parents are.

Step two – Record that information on the BPA database

Step three – Select the pigs that are suitable for breeding the next generations of pedigree pigs and register them in the BPA Herdbook

■ The rules

- Newly born pigs have to be individually identified and recorded on the BPA database with details of their parents within 10 weeks of birth. This is so we have a chance to inspect them whilst they are still young and their parents are still around if we need to take a DNA sample.
- Only the breeder may birth notify a litter and you must be the registered owner of the dam. The boar could be borrowed or rented but the sow must be registered to you.
- Only the breeder can register a birth notified pig. A
 registered pig carries the herd name or prefix of the
 breeder. If you sold a pig for fattening because you
 didn't think it was good enough then you wouldn't want
 someone else to register the pig using your herd name.
- Only the registered owner can transfer the ownership of a registered pig. (You can't tell the DVLA computer that you own your neighbours car.)
- You must keep certain records on farm to back up your pedigree records. The BPA has the right to inspect your pigs and your records and take DNA samples for pedigree verification.
- You must comply with DEFRA rules and regulations designed to protect pigs from the spread of disease. This means registering your herd with the local Animal Health Office and completing movement licences when you move your pigs.



A year in the life of a pedigree breeder

Its early January and your sow gives birth. Make a note in your records of the date of birth, the total number born and the number born alive. Remember that the sooner you identify and birth notify the litter the sooner your piglets appear for free in the sales listings on the BPA website.	Its <u>late February</u> eight weeks later and time to wean the piglets. If you haven't already done so make sure you identify all the pigs in the litter starting with the males. You now have two weeks left to fill out the birth notification form and get it into the BPA.	Its <u>early March</u> (5 days after weaning) your sow should be coming in heat soon. Have you lined up a boar or thought abou using AI. As a rule of thumb you should not use a boar that shares any parents or grandparents with your sow. Use the onlin Herdbook to check both pedigrees.
Its mid March and you realise you haven't sent in the Birth Notification form. Don't panic you can still do it on-line but remember the sow must be registered in your name for you to birth notify her litter.	Please don't sell weaners that are not birth notified. So many people buy a pig to eat and then want to breed from her later on. You always have the right to refuse to register the pig in the herdbook but it is very difficult to birth notify pigs once they have moved off your farm.	Its <u>lune</u> and your pigs are ready for the butcher. Its time to see if there are any good enough for breeding. Check that they are good sound pigs with strong legs and feet and plenty of well placed teats. Use the breed standard to make your final decision.
Issue Meat Certificates for the pigs that you send to the butcher. They help to sell the pork and the pigs are automatically "killed off" on the BPA database.	Advertise your breeding stock using the youngstock advertising service on the BPA website. Remember to register and transfer any pigs that you sell for breeding. Check the rules on identification for both the BPA and DEFRA.	Choose a boar to use on any gilts that you have selected for breeding. Remember the rule of thumb for choosing a boar. Make a note of the date if the gilt comes in heat. Don't mate her on the first service and remember you need to match her to a boa of similar size.
Its <u>early September</u> . Time to think about serving if you want your pigs born after January Ist. You must record the service boar and also the date if possible.	Its <u>late September</u> . (21 days after service) Keep an eye on your gilt to see if she comes back in heat. Do this again at 42 days. If she doesn't return then its time to register her in the herdbook if you haven't already done so.	Its <u>January</u> . Your gilt has just farrowed. Congratulations you have completed another link in the chain of pedigree pig breeding that stretches back over 100 year

■ What's in a Pedigree name

Of course you can call your pig by any pet name that you like but every pedigree pig has a pedigree name. The pedigree name is made up of three parts.

The herd prefix.

This tells you who bred the pig. Your prefix is usually the name of your farm but it can be any unique name not already in use. It has to be one word and it can't be the name of a place. You can't name you herd after your village as you might not be the only pig farmer in the village.

The line name.

Pedigree pig breeding recognises the equality of the sexes so females (gilts) are called after their mothers (the dam) and males (boars) after their fathers (the sire). Each breed has a number of female lines and male lines each of which has its own special characteristics. Experienced breeders can recognise lines within the breed just by appearance.



The pedigree numeral.

The last part of the name is a number. The traditional method is like naming a sequence of films. Rocky, Rocky II, Rocky III etc. The first pig that you breed in your herd from each line is just called by the prefix and the line name e.g. Tates Royal Catalina. The next one would be Tates Royal Catalina 2 and so on up to Tates Royal Catalina 5663 which tells you that the Tates herd has registered five thousand six hundred and thirty three Royal Catalina sows in the Large White Herdbook.

The alternative is to use the ear number as the pedigree numeral. Choose which system you want to use when you register your first pig.

■ Identification of Pedigree Pigs

Every pedigree litter should be birth notified as this is an important part of the sows breeding record. Every pig in the litter should be identified and included in the Birth Notification. We need every possible pig to be available for the conservation programme. The decision on which pigs to keep for breeding comes much later.

Every pedigree pig must have an ear-mark.

Ear-marking must be carried out by the breeder of a pig (the person on whose premises the animal was born). It must be completed before weaning or mixing with another litter and in any case not later than eight weeks of age.

The BPA recording system recognises a pig by the Herd Designation Letters (A three letter membership code) of the breeder and an Ear Number. Ideally all this information should be visible on the pigs ear. It is not always possible to include the HDL but every birth notified pig must have an ear number.

Start numbering your first litter of pigs from one. Try to do the males in each litter first and then the females.

The BPA recommends Tattooing or Notching for Pedigree Identification at birth as these forms of ID cannot fall out.

More information about Ear Notching or Tattooing is available from the BPA office or website.

You can opt to use tags for identification of your pigs at birth but you must inform the BPA in writing with your first birth notification. You must then follow the rules for double tagging when you register any these pigs. Plastic button tags with your DEFRA herdmark on one side and your HDL and ear number on the other are best. We do not recommend metal tags for pedigree identification. Pigs for showing must be tattooed or notched.

Birth notified pigs can be identified with ear tattoos, ear notches or ear tags.

Registered pigs must be identified with ear tattoos, ear notches or double tags (one in each ear). The BPA database can hold two ID's for each registered pig which could be a notch and a tag, a tattoo and a tag or two tags with different numbers. Registered pigs identified with tags must be double tagged, one in each ear, the tag numbers can be the same or different. It is recommended that every registered pig should have two forms of identification recorded on the BPA database.

Replacement ID

Tattoos fade, Ear notches can get torn and tags can get pulled out. If your registered pig needs a replacement ID you must apply in writing to the BPA. An inspection and DNA testing may be required. You must also comlpy with DEFRA rules on identification.



Leaflets in this series:

Buying a Pedigree Pig

Owning a Pedigree Pig

Responsibilities and legal obligations

British Pig Association

Membership benefits

Pedigree Breeding

The first steps

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