

# Ask the VMD



Leon Riegel



Synthea Maas



Tim Trayer



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**Savage mothers**  
A reader asks:  
I recently put sows in a farrowing building and they started savaging their young. I can't understand why they started this now. Any ideas?  
Dr. Trayer comments:  
If the breeding stock that you've put into the farrowing building has not been subjected to any con-

finement, it is possible the farrowing crates have brought out the worst behavior in these animals.  
Another consideration is the way this building is being managed. If the environment is excessive — that is, primarily, the temperature is greater than 80 degrees Fahrenheit — the sows may be uncomfortable due to caked udders

and aggressive behavior results. Reproductive problems should also be investigated, such as inflamed mammary glands, abnormal uterine discharge, or off milk, since these symptoms may trigger the aggressive behavior.  
If the needle teeth of the baby pigs are not being cut properly, leaving sharp edges, an irritated sow may turn on her young.

The sudden change in diet possible may cause the sows to react violently toward their young. If they were allowed unlimited feed before entering the farrowing room, and are suddenly switched to limited feed at farrowing time, the breeding stock may become upset. With the current high feed costs, limiting the feed in the breeding stock prior to and during farrowing will create a better economic situation.  
You will occasionally find an individual female, particularly in gilts, that has a temperament which becomes disturbed by the

presence of young. To help remedy this individual situation, there are tranquilizers available to allow the gilt to get used to the pigs.  
If, however, this is a group behavioral problem, the source of the aggressive behavior must be identified, whether it is ventilation, heat, needle teeth, etc.  
A gilt which displays totally berserk behavior should have their baby pigs weaned to another sow that is farrowing and be culled from the herd. Apparently her temperament is not suited for being a good mother.

## Ladies Day Out

LITITZ—The Lancaster County Farmers' Association's Ladies Day Out and their fifth heritage trail tour is scheduled for Thursday.  
This year the day will include a tour of five historical homes in the area, a fashion show, and workshops in the afternoon on time

budgeting, interior design and country crafts.  
For more details on the tour or for reservations, call Becky Wivell, 717/426-1501; Ester Stoltzfus, 442-4291; Svea Hoover, 768-8785; Irene Warner, 442-4529; or Ginny Ranch, 687-7353.

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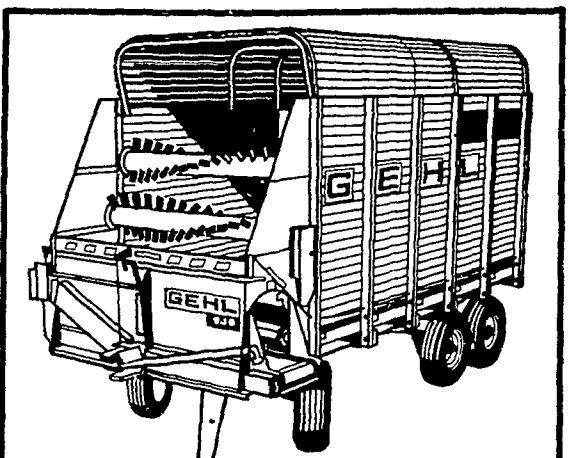
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