

PCA_054 Drenching Piglets or Weaner Pigs (Expiry: Oct 2025)

I. OBJECTIVE

To describe a standardised procedure for performing drenching in piglets or weaner pigs for scientific purposes.

II. DEFINITIONS

Competent - “the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required regarding the care and use of animals. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply knowledge and skill to new situations and environments.”¹

III. COMMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

- Only approved drenches either commercially available for piglets or prescribed by a veterinarian and/or approved by the Animal Ethics Committee are to be used.
- Generally, piglets or weaners should be drenched in their pens, minimising any potential handling and transport associated stress.
- When performed for the purpose of teaching: 3 trained operators must be available to conduct this procedure. The procedure may be done with two operators where the technique is practiced without administering the drench. This requirement is not applicable to the procedure when being performed for the purpose of research i.e. experienced and competent research staff may not require 3 operators present to safely and effectively administer a drench to piglets or weaners.
- Relative to animal ethics applications, when using this SOP, the following must be described in the individual ethics application: intended frequency/timeline of this animal use, any intended variation to this procedure.
- Pigs vocalise when they are handled: although this behaviour should not be ignored, be aware this does not necessarily indicate that they are experiencing pain or distress. Competency requires that you can distinguish between normal and abnormal behaviour. Ask your supervisor for advice if you are uncertain.
- Unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian for therapeutic treatment, a pig should not receive more than two drenches in any one 24-hour period.
- As per routine conditions (see document footer) this procedure must be performed by, or under the direct supervision of, personnel who are competent to perform the procedure.

IV. PREPARATION

- Ensure the drenching gun is loaded and is operating in good working order prior to commencing.
- Ensure the drenching compound has been stored according to manufacturer’s instructions and note the product’s expiry date and batch number.

V. EQUIPMENT

- PPE, as appropriate relative to the location and procedure
 - Ear protection must be worn by operators during this procedure
 - Overalls, steel-capped rubber boots are recommended
- Drenching gun (commercially available product, suitable for use in small to medium pigs)
- Drenching compound (within a “drench container”)
- Stock marker (crayon)

¹ NHMRC, 2013, *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Conditions:

- Investigators named in an animal ethics application, relative to this SOP, must be competent to implement the SOP
- Any variation to this SOP must be described in the relevant animal ethics application
- If this SOP has not been reviewed and approved by a UQ AEC within the last three years it is no longer valid and cannot be used in animal ethics applications until reapproved (see “AEC Reviewed/Approved” date in this document’s header).

VI. PROCEDURE

1. The two/three operators apply their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and establish their roles:

When being performed for the purpose of teaching:

- a) Person 1 will catch and hold the piglet or weaner (the Catcher);
- b) Person 2 will drench piglets or weaners (the Drencher);
- c) Person 3 will hold the drench container and mark piglets or weaners once they have been drenched (the Marker). If no drench is administered, the Drencher may perform the marking.

When being performed for the purpose of research, the Drencher may also perform the role of the Marker (thus, requiring only two operators for the procedure).

2. The Catcher enters the pen and quietly and calmly catches and restrains piglets or weaners one at a time.
Refer to [PCA_050 Handling of Pigs](#): piglets or weaners are held via one arm around the piglet and the other hand holding the head steady via the bottom jaw.
3. The Drencher then approaches the restrained animal. Using one hand they support the back of the head, and with their other hand they discharge the drenching compound into the oropharynx of the animal.
4. Once the piglet or weaner has received the drench the Marker will mark the piglet with the crayon, OR if the piglet or weaner has had the technique of drenching performed without drench, the Drencher will perform the marking.
5. The Catcher then releases the piglet or weaner back into the pen and monitors for any signs of adverse outcomes (e.g. coughing, difficulty breathing, lethargy). If an unexpected adverse event(s) occurs take immediate action as outlined on the [animal ethics webpage](#), otherwise proceed to catch the next piglet or weaner.

| Version # | Reviewing AEC (note: all other relevant AECs ratify the approval) | AEC Review Date | Approval To Date |
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