

Fetal Absorption

(And other conception, fetal and farrowing concerns)

Do you ever just know your gilt or sow got bred only to see her cycle again 18 to 21 days later. No sign of aborting or miscarriage? Or your sows normal litter count is lower than usual. This may help you understand. It sounds trite or small minded but we all know, “Stuff Happens”, and we may never know why. Of course there are reasons but the breeding/farrowing time of swine is short in comparison, the productive lifespan of swine is also considerably shorter, they have more per birthing than many other species, and professional testing for answers is very expensive. For those reasons and a few others, it’s usually recommended to accept some problematic issues and move on but always learn from them. Check everything that happened prior to breeding and during pregnancy and farrowing and make sure conditions are as favorable as possible and try again. Also whatever happened, don’t always put the blame on the sow. We hear that a lot and sometimes that’s the case but not always. Your boar may have been spent or near the end of his viable healthy sperm count without getting a rest. Maybe she was bred but the fetus wasn’t viable or survivable due to malformed or unhealthy sperm or ovum. There could also be too much size difference in the gilt/sow and boar and he missed his mark. See [Reproductive System](#) under the [Breeding](#) chapter in our Tutorial. Notice the bladder is very near and off the cervix. With size difference very often the bladder is entered rather than the cervix. There are several reasons for failed breeding that can be attributed to the sow or the boar and you can learn more about them by reviewing the [Breeding](#) and [Farrowing](#) chapters in our Tutorial on the RWHHA website.

If she became bred but something wasn’t just right, she can absorb the fetuses from conception day thru to around day 38. All charts vary some, giving or taking away a few days. She may absorb one, several or all. Disappeared and not known to exist. Don’t always assume the sow or boar is not fertile. This happens more often than we realize. After about 38 days fetal bone is being formed and they can not be absorbed. This can result in fetus’ that are not fully formed at farrowing, and maybe at various stages of growth.

Those fetus should not be confused with Parvo deaths which can also present at different stages of growth. Often referred to as mummified. (read about [Porcine Parvo Virus](#) in our Tutorial). It’s important to know the difference. Parvo should be treated.

Fully formed but stillborn could be a result of something going wrong at conception but the fetus was able to survive in utero longer. Stillborn could also be the result of a twisted umbilical cord cutting off oxygen and/or blood flow during farrowing, or many other explanations

Thankfully Red Wattles are great breeders and mothers and rarely have problems. However, “Stuff Happens”, and we all need to be aware of them and possibly why and to know how to make corrections if possible in the future.

Remember Mother Nature. If something isn't quite right, nature usually takes care of it. Your sow or gilt will cycle again earlier and hopefully have a successful litter next time. This is how Mother Nature has equipped all animals. Survival of the fittest.

It's important to examine the WHOLE picture or history and possibly come to a conclusion by process of elimination.

