IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC
A small percentage of sows that farrow may have difficulties in the birth process due to pigs lodging in the birth canal. If this occurs and the sow does not farrow a pig over a long period of time it will become necessary to assist the sow, otherwise she may injure herself and often lose the remaining pigs to be born. A 4-H’er who knows what to do will often be able to save pigs.

WHAT YOUR 4-H’ERS WILL ACCOMPLISH
By actively participating in this activity your members will be able to do the following:
1. Demonstrate how to assist a sow in trouble when farrowing her pigs.
2. Further develop the life skills of responding to a crisis situation, making decisions, and gaining self-confidence.

PREPARE FOR THE MEETING
Usually a little time spent planning the meeting, reviewing the resource materials, collecting the supplies required, and involving others in each of these steps will make the meeting more enjoyable for all.

Supplies: mild soap or lubricant, disinfectant, a hand and arm rubber glove, box with an opening to simulate the sow, plus a model pig made from the University of Minnesota 4-H Pig Pattern, and a two pound coffee can to use as an opening to the cardboard box or sac.

FACILITATE THE MEETING
Your members, by pooling their experiences and previous knowledge, will have a good idea how to help a sow in trouble at farrowing time. Give them an opportunity to demonstrate how they would solve the problem before showing or telling them how. The opportunity to develop both life and project skills are enhanced by using an experiential approach. The nine steps of this method plus supporting situation statements and questions are provided for your use.
SITUATION: It has been an hour to an hour and one-half since the sow farrowed her last pig and she is straining severely.

TASK: Demonstrate what you would do to assist the sow in farrowing the next pig.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Q. At the point that you know your sow is in trouble, what's the first thing you should do?
A. Immediately contact the local veterinarian and point out the problem that you are having with the sow. He may suggest some things for you to do while he is on his way.

Q. If you are going to help or assist the sow in farrowing her next pig yourself while the veterinarian is on the way to your farm, how would you prepare yourself?
A. Thoroughly scrub your hand and arm clear up to the shoulder with a mild soap or detergent. Rinse this off and apply a lubricant over your hand and arm up your shoulder. The 4-H'er could choose to use a rubber sleeve glove to put on before entering the sow—in this case a lubricant would be put over the entire glove, hand, and arm up to the shoulder region.

Q. How would you prepare the sow before assisting her?
A. Take a disinfectant or warm water and clean the area around the vulva region. Also disinfect this area with a mild disinfectant such as a tincture of iodine.

Q. What are some of the possible problems that the sow may be having in order to deliver the pigs?
A. Baby pigs could be born head or hind legs first. Some of the principle problems are:
   1. Two pigs being lodged in the birth canal or two pigs trying to be born at the same time and the opening is not large enough to pass both of them through.
   2. You may have a pig that is being presented sideways and, therefore, the opening is not large enough to permit the pig to pass through.

Q. Knowing some of the problems that cause difficulties in delivering the pigs, what is your next step?
A. You are ready to go in. You would gently insert your hand into the vulva region and extend it as far as you could until you feel the cervix opening. At this point you explore gently with your fingers. If you feel two pigs in the birth canal region gently force one pig back and assist the other pig forward. If you feel one pig lodged in the birth canal sideways try to maneuver the pig around so that you get either the head first or the hind legs first entering the birth canal and gently pull forward. It is not necessary to pull the pig entirely out, just simply free it from being lodged in the birth canal.

Q. When would you give the sow oxytocin?
A. After you have dislodged the baby pig if the sow still does not farrow the pig for a 15-20 minute period of time and does not appear to be laboring, producers will administer 1-2 ccs of oxytocin which will force the sow to continue on her birth process. This should never be administered until you are certain that there is not a pig lodged in the birth canal.

Q. What is the action of the oxytocin in the farrowing process?
A. Oxytocin causes the contraction of smooth muscle and this will cause the sow to contract her uterus forcing the pig down out of the reproductive tract. Oxytocin also causes contraction of the smooth muscles in the mammary tissue causing let-down or milk flow.

Supporting Activities
Caring for the Newborn Pig
Clipping a Pig's Needle Teeth
Docking a Pig's Tail
Giving Iron to Your Pig
Castrating a Pig
Identifying Pig Litter Mates