

## MRES STUDENTSHIP

The effect of lactation housing on the behaviour and welfare of pigs.

### Supervisor Details:

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### Background

The farrowing crate was originally introduced as a management tool in pig farming in the 1960s and is still widely used in Ireland. It is used to improve ease of management of sows, allow higher stocking densities of sows on farms and to reduce piglet mortality. In recent years concerns about animal welfare have meant that several European countries have introduced legislation restricting the use of farrowing crates. The use of 'free-farrowing' pens is being encouraged in many others. For instance, the Danish pig industry aim to have 10% of Danish sows suckling piglets in loose pens by 2020. Use of free farrowing pens is beneficial for sow welfare, with regard to permitting sows the ability to perform normal mothering behaviour. There may also be benefits to piglet welfare as they can interact more with the mother, and sows in loose pens are more responsive to piglet vocalisations. To date there has been extremely low adoption of free-farrowing crates in Ireland, and there are few Irish data relating to the productivity and welfare of pigs using free-farrowing systems. This project will address questions regarding the behaviour and welfare of sows and piglets when managed in free-farrowing pens, compared with traditional farrowing crates. The study will provide information that will help Irish pig farmers adopt free farrowing systems, and will thus allow pig farmers to target marketing opportunities and contribute to the positive image of the Irish pig industry as well as addressing concerns about pig welfare.

It is expected that the student will contribute to the final design of the study, and identify target areas for investigation. The candidate will be involved in all aspects of the project including hypothesis development, experimental design, data collection, statistical analysis, and preparation of a scientific manuscript.

### Requirements

Applicants should have an Honours degree (1H or 2H1) in Agricultural Science, Veterinary Science, Zoology, Animal Ecology or other relevant discipline. A full driving licence would be a distinct advantage. The successful candidate should be self-motivated and will be expected to work with animals as well as in the laboratory. The student will be based at the Teagasc Research Centre at Moorepark Fermoy, Co. Cork and will be registered and complete taught modules at UCC. College fees are paid by the student.

### Fees

University fees for 2018/2019 are €5,770. The Irish Pig Health Society will provide a bursary of €1,500 towards payment of fees.

### Application Procedure

Submit an electronic copy of a Curriculum Vitae (to include the names and contact details of two referees) and a cover letter simultaneously to:

- Dr Keelin O'Driscoll, Teagasc, Pig Production Development Dept., Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre, Fermoy, Co. Cork, Ireland ([keelin.odriscoll@teagasc.ie](mailto:keelin.odriscoll@teagasc.ie))
- Dr Fidelma Butler, School of BEES, UCC, Cork, Ireland ([F.Butler@ucc.ie](mailto:F.Butler@ucc.ie))

This project will commence in September 2018. Additional details of how to apply can be found at: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/bees/courses/postgrad/>