

# Just the Facts!

## Estrus or Heat Detection

Detecting standing heat is the best way to estimate ovulation, or release of the egg to be fertilized. Every known or suspected open sow or available gilt should be heat checked with a boar everyday, if one is available. Estrus detection is the single most important part of a successful artificial insemination program!

### Semen Storage

- Store in a temperature controlled device, which is maintained at 60° to 64° F.
- Gently rotate the bottles twice per day to re-suspend the sperm cells.
- To achieve highest farrowing rates and litter size, attempt to inseminate sows with fresh semen, less than 24-36 hours old.

### Physiological signs

#### 1. Swelling of vulva

- Vulva may appear swollen and red in gilts, this is a less prominent sign in sows.

#### 2. Mucus discharge

- There is a sticky, viscous secretion at the vulva.
- This mucus is only present for a short period of time and may even go unnoticed.

### Behavioral signs

#### 1. Increased activity and vocalization

- The female becomes more excitable and increasingly aware of her environment. She may vocalize by emitting deep groaning sounds.

#### 2. Mounting activity

- When in doubt, take the sow or gilt and a mature boar (if available) to a neutral pen. If the sow is in heat, she will stand when the boar attempts to mount her.

#### 3. Standing reflex

- The standing reflex is the tendency of the female to stand upon application of backpressure.
- Ears will often perk up and the female will tend to “lock up” (due to muscle contractions).
- If heat is suspected, briskly rub the sow’s side low on the flank with one hand, while pushing down on her back. The belly rubbing stimulates the “nosing” of a boar and may further aid in stimulation.