

Just the Facts!

Semen Management

1. Scheduling the timing of delivery

- Schedule the ordering/delivery of semen to your farm to coordinate when the females will be in estrus, or standing heat. Record the date that your sow went into estrus last time as this will help you determine when she will be in estrus again (21 day average estrous cycle length).
- Most boar studs only collect boars and ship semen on certain days. Understanding their schedule and the transit time will allow for timely artificial insemination in your herd.

2. Storing the Semen

Timing:

- Length of sperm viability is determined by the type of extender used. While every attempt should be made to inseminate females with semen that is fresh (less than 72 hours old). If older semen must be used, there may be an effect on fertility. Talk to the boar stud where the semen was purchased and evaluate under a microscope to help determine viability.

Temperature:

- Semen should be stored between 59° - 68°F, no matter what stage of transportation it is in. This includes in the lab in which it is collected, on the farm, or in between.
- If the semen reaches a temperature below or above these guidelines, sperm may begin to die (decreasing the effectiveness of the dose) and cause a reduction in shelf life. It may be difficult to maintain proper semen temperature in extreme weather conditions.
- Semen is also sensitive to light (sunlight).
- The bottom line: semen **MUST** be packaged, transported and stored so that the proper temperature is maintained!

Method:

- Most semen is transported in polystyrene boxes. The thicker the walls of polystyrene box, the better it will remain insulated. Included in the shipment will be gel or ice packs. They will also help maintain the temperature of the semen.
- There are a few ways to ensure proper storage of semen at home, once it has been delivered.
 - Purchase a device that will ensure the temperature stays at the correct setting. An example of this would be a miniature wine refrigerator, or one that has temperatures that will reach 59° - 68° F. There is also equipment specifically for swine semen storage.
 - Obtaining some warm packs or cool packs, appropriate to the time of year and temperature. They can be found at most discount or grocery stores. It is important to remember that these packs must be the correct temperature before they have exposure to the semen. When packs have reached optimum temperature, just add them to the polystyrene box the semen was shipped in.
 - Also, when storing semen, make sure to gently rotate the bottles twice per day to re-suspend the sperm cells. This allows the cells to get re-exposed to the nutrients in the extender.
 - Overall, remember that semen is highly sensitive to temperature, and you should control temperature as much as possible during storage and handling.