

# 20 Special Requirements for Animal Welfare Puts Danish Pig Producers Among the Best in the EU

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Danish Agriculture & Food Council  
Pig Research Centre

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In Denmark, we of course meet the EU's requirements for pig welfare, and on 20 parameters, we go above and beyond EU legislation to create good conditions for our animals. Every time a new stable is built in Denmark, we make significant progress in animal welfare.

Below, you can read about the 20 specific Danish animal welfare requirements for pigs:

1. **Danish pig production leads the EU in voluntarily converting farrowing pens to free-farrowing pens** (approximately 12.500 pens as of January 1, 2024, corresponding to 5 % of all pens). A legal requirement for free farrowing in new stables is expected in 2025, with a transition period for existing stables.
2. **All new mating stables in Denmark have been free-housing since 2015**, and by 2035, all mating stables must be free-housing. Only Sweden, Germany, Norway, and the UK have similar legal requirements.
3. **As of January 1st, 2025, a redistribution model will be implemented** where producers keeping pigs with intact tails receive cost compensation from those still tail-docking. The goal is to double the number of pigs with intact tails from 500.000 three years in a row to reach 4 million Danish pigs with intact tails by the end of 2028.
4. **All stables for pigs over 20 kg must have showering systems** to ensure pig welfare and a good barn climate.
5. **Denmark requires both enrichment and rooting materials** in all pig stables.
6. **Enrichment and rooting materials must be of natural origin**, such as straw, wood, or other natural materials.



7. **Since the end of 2018, there has been an industry requirement for local anesthesia and long-lasting pain relief during castration of piglets.** This becomes a legal requirement on January 1st, 2025.
8. **About 30% of male pigs (boars) slaughtered in Denmark are not castrated.**
9. **Bedding is required in resting areas for pregnant sows.**
10. **Minimum floor requirements exist for weaner pigs (50%) and finishing pigs (30%) to be solid or drained flooring,** ensuring a comfortable resting area.
11. **There are requirements for hospital pens for all groups of pigs,** and there must always be a space available.
12. **Hospital pens must have soft bedding, a heat source, and the option for cooling.** EU legislation does not specify such requirements.
13. **In addition to official inspections, an independent third-party audit is conducted in all Danish pig herds** to ensure compliance with animal welfare and food safety standards. All herds are inspected at least once every three years. One-third of Danish herds are inspected annually due to participation in special labeling schemes for pork.
14. **Health advisory requirements apply.** All large herds (over 300 sows) must have a health advisory agreement with a veterinarian. This ensures animal welfare and trust in use of veterinary medicine.
15. **Veterinarians are not allowed to profit from prescribing medications in Denmark.**
16. **A “yellow card” system enforces stricter control for farms that exceed regulatory limits on medication use.**
17. **All employees who handle veterinary medicine must complete a medicine handling course.**
18. **In 2010, the pig industry voluntarily stopped using cephalosporins,** which are critically important antibiotics for treating human diseases.
19. **Denmark has a maximum 8-hour transport time for sows,** with stricter requirements for vehicle design (mechanical ventilation, drinking water access, GPS tracking). Most Danish pigs are slaughtered after transport times of under 4 hours.
20. **Transport of weaner pigs over 8 hours must allow 20% more space than EU regulations require.**