

FAQ Better Life label Pigs concerning the end of the transitional period in 2025

We have received many questions about criteria with a transitional period that ends on 01-01-2025. For clarity, we have summarised the most common questions and answers here. The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals has also established a number of supplementary decisions that affect the criteria with a transitional period that ends on 01-01-2025. Please refer to the supplementary decisions and interpretations published on the [website](#).

General

1. *Will stricter/supplementary criteria apply from 01-01-2025?*

At the start of Better Life Pigs in 2010, a number of criteria stipulated provisions that must be complied with in the case of new construction or renovation by no later than 01-01-2025. Many pig farmers who participate in Better Life Pigs have already adapted their farms to comply with these criteria in recent years when they have renovated existing buildings or built new ones. However, the end of the transitional period is approaching and there are still participating pig farmers who have to make these changes.

2. *If Better Life inspections always take place in December, which criteria will be applied in December 2024?*

The farm will be inspected based on the criteria and supplementary decisions that apply at the time of the inspection. During the Better Life inspection in December 2024, the criteria subject to a transitional period that expires on 01-01-2025 will not be inspected if no new construction or renovation has taken place at that time. With effect from 01-01-2025, the criteria subject to a transitional period that expires on 01-01-2025 will be a standard component of Better Life inspections (in addition to the previously applicable criteria).

3. *Our permit application to renovate the pig house has still not been approved. How will this affect compliance?*

We are aware of this issue, but no decision has been taken yet. The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals has commissioned an agency specialised in permit applications for renovating and constructing agricultural buildings to investigate which of the criteria subject to a transitional period that expires on 01-01-2025 are covered by a permit obligation. A decision will be made on how to deal with this based on the results of the agency's report. No statements can be made on this matter at the moment. However, we recommend you keep a record of your permit application process.

Daylight

4. *Can daylight lamps be used instead of natural daylight through the walls and/or roofs?*

No, this is not permitted. Daylight mimicking lamps are not considered to be an acceptable alternative to natural daylight. With new construction and/or renovation after 01-01-2011, but no later than from 01-01-2025, daylight permeable surfaces must be installed in Better Life pig houses. The minimum percentage of daylight permeable surface required varies according to whether light enters through windows, skylights in the roof or lightwells. The required minimum percentages also differ for Better Life 1, 2 and 3 stars. See the criteria for the minimum percentages.

5. *Can the daylight permeable surface also consist of materials other than standard clear glass, for example materials that are slightly less transparent?*

The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals has no objection to the use of other materials in a daylight permeable surface. For example, opaque glass, glass blocks or polycarbonate roofing sheets. However, an equivalent total amount of daylight must be able to pass through these materials as standard glass. This can be determined by measuring the light transmission value. A lower transmission value must be compensated for by providing a larger daylight permeable surface area.

Calculation example:

The floor area in the house is 100 m². The windows in the side wall must be at least 2% of the floor area, i.e. $0.02 \times 100 \text{ m}^2 = 2 \text{ m}^2$. However, the material to be used in the daylight permeable surface has a light transmission value of 58%.

The size of the daylight permeable surface area is calculated as follows. This assumes a transmission value of 0.8 for standard glass:

$(0.8/\text{transmission value} \times \text{percentage of daylight permeable area} \times \text{floor area})$

$$0.8/0.58 \times 0.02 \times 100 \text{ m}^2 = 2.76 \text{ m}^2$$

NB: The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals recommends compensating in this way. This aspect is not inspected yet. The above will be included in the next revision of the criteria.

6. *Is indirect daylight also permitted?*

Yes. Indirect daylight is also permitted. The area of the smallest window (inside or outside) should be used as a limiting factor when calculating the daylight permeable surface area. In other words, the surface area of the smallest window determines the daylight permeable surface area.

7. *Can a lightwell be installed in the side wall instead of in the roof?*

No, lightwells must not be installed in the side wall. The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals wants to remain in line with the principles of *Maatlat Duurzame Veehouderij* and in addition there is a higher risk of light being obstructed by other buildings or trees close by.

8. *Can white chalk be applied to the windows to avoid heat stress?*

Yes, this is permitted. Please note that chalk must be removed again after the summer so light transmission is not affected during the remainder of the year. The permitted period for applying chalk is the summer half-year according to the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI). This is the period from 1 April to 30 September. The layer of chalk must still permit daylight transmission through the surface. It must not be thick enough to disrupt the natural day and night rhythm in the house. Also see supplementary decision of 20-12-2023.

Climate

9. *With ceiling and duct ventilation there is also air above the ceiling. Can this volume be included in the calculation of the air volume?*

No, this is not permitted. Criterion AH04 states that with new construction and/or renovation after 01-01-2011 but no later than from 01-01-2025, the minimum volume of the house must be at least 1.2 m³ per piglet. This can be calculated by dividing the volume of the section (length x height x width) by the number of piglets it houses. The Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals is uncertain about the extent to which air above the ceiling is readily available and how much influence this has on air quality. For this reason, including the air above the ceiling in calculations is not permitted.

10. *The section for weaned piglets cannot comply with the requirement of 1.2 m³ per piglet, even though the house climate is adequate. Is compliance in another way possible?*

The minimum number of cubic metres is necessary to ensure a good climate in the house. The next revision will describe other ways of ensuring a good climate in the house based on new monitoring technology. A decision has been made to offer farms that cannot comply with the criteria for air volume per piglet by 01-01-2025 an alternative by switching more quickly to digital monitoring. This technology will be used for climate control in the house. See supplementary decision of 20-12-2023. More information will follow in the course of 2024.

Farrowing pen

11. *Piglets in the farrowing pen must be able to move around the pen freely and without obstruction. What happens when the sow's snout is against the feeder?*

Sows sometimes lie with their snout against the feeder. However, as sows do not do this permanently there are also times when the piglets can move around freely. When the piglets are a few days old, they can also jump over her snout.

12. *Piglets in the farrowing pen must be able to move around the pen freely and without obstruction. What about pens with moveable floors?*

Moveable floors are still permitted. This type of flooring is usually only a potential obstacle for the piglets during the first few days.

Dunging area

13. *Can the dunging area still be made of triangular slats?*

Yes, triangular slats are, and will continue to be, permitted for all animal categories as long as they provide sufficient grip. This also applies to other materials. There will be two changes to the criteria with new construction and renovation, but no later than 01-01-2025: Firstly, specifically purchased concrete floors must have a surface roughness of 63 Leroux or FSC2000 value 0.60. Secondly, dunging areas with a solid floor must be covered with straw or similar litter. Also see supplementary decision of 20-12-2023.

Feeding pens

14. *The law provides that pigs may be temporarily isolated from the group if the pigs are exceptionally aggressive, ill, injured or are being attacked by other pigs. Can sows still be isolated from the group using individual feeding pens from 01-01-2025?*

No, this is not permitted. Criterion Z10 (Phasing out feeding pens with outlets) states that with new construction and/or renovation after 01-01-2011, but no later than 01-01-2025, the use of feeding pens is not permitted. This means that at the end of the transitional period, feeding pens may not be used in an emergency situation to isolate sows from the group. As an alternative, an aggressive or injured sow may be temporarily isolated in the sick bay.

Group housing

15. *Can finishers or sows be kept in groups smaller than 20 after 2025?*

Yes, this is permitted if there is a larger surface area per animal. If pigs are raised in larger groups, they can 'borrow' space from each other to create different functional areas in the pen. Forming larger groups is not always possible, or desirable, in some existing situations. For this reason, a decision has been made to relax the maximum stocking density of smaller groups at 1 star pig farms. See supplementary decision of 20-12-2023.

16. *For example, the stocking density in the sow house has changed to 2.40 m² per sow as there are fewer than 20 pigs in the group. How many square metres of solid floor space is obligatory in this case?*

Criterion Z08.1 states that the surface area must be at least 2.25 m² per sow, of which at least 1.3 m² is a solid floor. This criterion remains unchanged in the new situation.

Calculation example: The pen houses 12 sows. The dimensions are $12 \times 2.25 \text{ m}^2 = 27 \text{ m}^2$. Of this area, $12 \times 1.3 \text{ m}^2 = 15.6 \text{ m}^2$ is a solid floor. From 01-01-2025, groups of up to and including 19 sows must be provided with at least 2.40 m² per sow. This pen may house $27/2.40 = 11.25 = 11$ sows. The requirements for a solid floor remain 1.3 m² per 2.25 m² and therefore apply unchanged. No changes need to be made to the floor as there is now a proportionally larger solid floor area per sow.

17. *To comply with a group size of 20 or more pigs, creating passageways between interconnected pens is an option. Which criteria must these passageways comply with?*

Passageways comply if they are easily accessible to the pigs. For example, two pigs must be easily able to pass through the passageway at the same time, there must be no obstacles and there must be sufficient lighting. In addition, the passageway must have as few tight bends or dead ends as possible. The supplementary decisions of 2-12-2022 and 27-09-2023 contain more details.

18. *Can these passageways be temporarily closed?*

When pens are connected in order to comply with a certain group size, the passageways must always be open. The principle is that, with stable groups, temporarily closing and reopening passageways can cause aggression when the pigs establish a new hierarchy. The supplementary decision of 27-09-2023 states a limited number of exceptions relating to setting up weaned piglets, infectious diseases and before pigs permanently leave the farm.