PIG NUTRITION

Using wheat bran in sow diets

Where wheat bran fits in gestation and lactation diets, typical inclusion rates, and how to balance its phosphorus and energy. A practical guide for pig producers.

By FeedSport Nutrition Team · Published 6 October 2026 · 2 min read

KEY POINTS

- Wheat bran works best in dry (gestating) sow diets, where fibre improves fullness and gut function.
- Gestation diets commonly include around 10–25% bran. Lactation diets need much less.
- Bran is high in phosphorus and low in calcium, so adjust limestone to keep the calcium-to-phosphorus ratio right.
- Bran is bulky and can go stale. Buy what you will use within a few weeks.

Wheat bran is the outer layer of the wheat grain, left over from flour milling. It is moderately high in protein, high in fibre and relatively low in energy. That combination makes it a poor fit for young, fast-growing pigs and a very good fit for sows.

Why fibre helps gestating sows

Pregnant sows are fed a restricted amount of feed to stop them getting too fat. Restricted feeding leaves them hungry, which can lead to restlessness, bar-biting and aggression in group housing. Fibrous ingredients like wheat bran:

- **Increase fullness** without adding much energy, so sows are calmer between meals.
- **Support gut health.** Fibre is fermented in the large intestine, which helps keep droppings soft.
- **Reduce constipation around farrowing**, which is linked to longer farrowing and more stillborn piglets.

Typical inclusion rates

Diet	Typical wheat bran inclusion	Notes
Gestation (dry sow)	about 10–25%	Higher rates are possible if energy is balanced
Late gestation / pre-farrowing	about 10–20%	Helps prevent constipation

Diet	Typical wheat bran inclusion	Notes
Lactation	about 0–10%	Sows need high energy density to support milk
Weaners and growers	low or none	Fibre dilutes energy and slows growth

These are general ranges. The right level depends on your other ingredients, the sow's body condition and how much feed she gets each day.

Balancing the nutrients

On our specification, wheat bran contains about 15.2% crude protein, 9% crude fibre and about 2,370 kcal ME/kg for pigs. Compare that with about 3,358 kcal for sorghum. When you replace grain with bran:

- **Energy falls.** In gestation that is often fine, or even the goal. Check that the sow's daily energy intake still matches her needs, and increase the daily feed allowance slightly if needed.
- **Phosphorus rises.** Bran is rich in phosphorus, much of it as phytate, which sows digest only partly. You may be able to reduce dicalcium phosphate.
- **Calcium stays low.** Bran contains very little calcium. Add feed limestone to keep the calcium-to-phosphorus ratio within your target range.

Lactation: use with care

A lactating sow eats as much as she can and still often loses body condition, because milk production is so demanding. Bulky, low-energy feed limits how much energy she can take in. Keep bran low in lactation diets, and focus on energy, lysine and plenty of clean water.

Storage and quality

- Bran is bulky. A 40 kg bag holds much less feed value than a bag of grain, so plan storage space.
- The oil in bran goes rancid over time, especially in warm conditions. Store it dry and off the floor, and use it within a few weeks.
- Check for mould, insects and off smells before mixing.

Getting started

Introduce bran gradually over a week and watch sow condition and dung consistency. Check the finished diet's energy and calcium-to-phosphorus ratio in the formulation tool, or ask us for a sow diet review.

Need a diet checked? Send your ingredients and targets to the FeedSport nutrition team on WhatsApp +263 77 468 4534 or sales@feedsport.co.zw.

Figures in this guide are typical values and general ranges. Confirm targets for your animals, genetics and ingredients, and check batch specifications before formulating.