

● Sow Gestation Crate Ban - “California Prop 12 got it right”

While California is a favorite punching bag for new ideas and exposing problems - [This one they got right.](#)

The gestation crate system started to be questioned in the late 1990's and in November, 2002, Florida was the first state to ban them. Today 12 states have banned the gestation crate. As more and more people understand this system of housing a sow, they reject it. It is a BLACK EYE FOR THE PORK INDUSTRY.

Defined - The gestation crate is 4 inches wider and 12 inches longer than a typical sow. A gestation crate system houses a sow from the time she enters the herd usually for 30 days before breeding and then after being bred for 115 days while she is progressing in pregnancy up until she is ready to birth piglets. This equates to approximately (5) five months before she is given the opportunity to walk or turn around.

The sow can stand up and lay down, but cannot walk or turn around while in the crate for months at a time. When laying down, the sow is sandwiched between the sow next to her on each side.

This system was invented in the 1960's to individually house a sow, and is extremely economical to maximize density of the number of sows in a barn. BUT, it is simply not humane for the sow. No animal should be confined for months in a crate like this. You cannot defend a gestation crate system. It is a relic of the past.

I am one of the producers who has changed my sow barn system away from gestation crates. I have removed all gestation crates. I am not alone in Pennsylvania though. There are also many sow farms with small herds (approximately 300-600 sows) that have shifted away from the gestation crate system of housing sows.

While we had to provide more square footage for our sows, requiring additional barn space, I am happy to report that we have greater sow comfort, improved sow health and production levels have increased. Also, our team members are very pleased to say goodbye to this old gestation crate system. It has been a success story for our farm.

I humbly ask you to consider the facts and why this change is the right thing to do.

Currently a proposal in G.T. Thompson's Farm Bill has language to roll back the **Prop 12** mandate from California that outlaws the use of gestation crate housing for pregnant sows in the California meat supply.

I am frustrated with the National Pork Producers' Council and the Farm Bureau's position to defend the gestation crate. It is time to move on.

How can our industry leaders protect and defend this system? They have come up with various arguments, BUT the issue is we have a responsibility to care for animals in a PROPER way and to move forward as we discover mistakes of the past.

The farm bill language to override Prop 12 is a refusal to accept change and progress in the pork industry.

I also want to offer my help and counsel to any pork producer searching for the answers on efficiently moving to a Prop 12 system.

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/Xk-AxE5Hrsk?si=28jEs979VLLk8lpF> (Hershey Ag's **Prop 12** Success Story: Unveiling the Sow Condos Advantage) or simply search Brent Hershey Prop 12 success on YOUTube.

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