

Farrowing behaviour

When pigs are born, the mother sow
Is quite unlike the ewe or cow.
She doesn't turn around and try
To lick the young until they're dry,
Or nudge them gently to their feet,
Or stand to help them find a teat.
The sow does none of this. Instead,
She stays unbudging in her bed.

But please don't think the mother swine
A more unkindly kind of kine,
Or call her over-fond of slumber:
It's just a case of size and number.
For if she stood and turned about
Each time another pig popped out,
Her other newborn sons and daughters
Would all be knocked head over trotters.
A sad event, but vastly worse
Is when she lies back down to nurse.
Ah, clever sow! You know it's wise
(Since you're a hundred times their size)
To not have piglets crunch and smother
Beneath an over-active mother.

Now, all this logic must be true,
But here's a different point of view.
Suppose, dear listener, one fine day
While there upon your bed you lay,
That suddenly *you* had to go
Through labour, say ten times or so,
And at the end you found you had
Not just a single lass or lad,
But pigs – perhaps a dozen – squalling,
Jostling, pushing, squealing, brawling,
Pigs above and pigs beneath,
And all with pointy little teeth;
Perhaps you too would then agree
With mother sow's philosophy:
*When young-uns come in tens and twelves,
They jolly well can mind themselves.*

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