

“All pigs should be let outside”:  
Negotiating the role of outdoor spaces in  
modern pig farming in Finland, c. 1900–  
1950s

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# Modern(izing) pig farming and pigs' places



Photos: KK2100:92/The Picture Collections of the Finnish Heritage Agency (left) and Ilkka, *Sianhoitokirja* [Pig Husbandry Guidebook], 1912 (right).

## **Agronomist Toivo Hossola in *Karjatalous* [animal husbandry] -magazine in 1925:**

“- - pig farming in summertime, despite its shortcomings, was much more rational compared to the contemporary way of locking pigs in dark and damp, poorly ventilated concrete pens where they receive their daily feed of dairy waste and concentrated fodder without pigs ever enjoying from sunshine or natural life, if possible, in outdoor pens located near water. The first requirement for organizing pigs' feeding in summer must be: *all pigs should be let outside from piggeries*, either to pastures or, in lack of [pastures], to outdoor pens.”

## **Agronomist Aarne Salokangas in *Sianhoidon käsikirja* [Pig Husbandry Guidebook] in 1933:**

“Many recently built piggeries have, in some ways, been failures. In them, durability and ease of work have been considered more than the aspect of what pigs require. And so they are more like prisons for pigs instead of being comfortable places for pigs. [...] On the other hand, there are examples of concrete piggeries built with skill in which pigs thrive, but it is a very expensive building.”

# (Re)defining the role of outdoor spaces in early modern production system

- Source of nutrients
- Sunshine
- Improved health
- Exercise
- Rooting

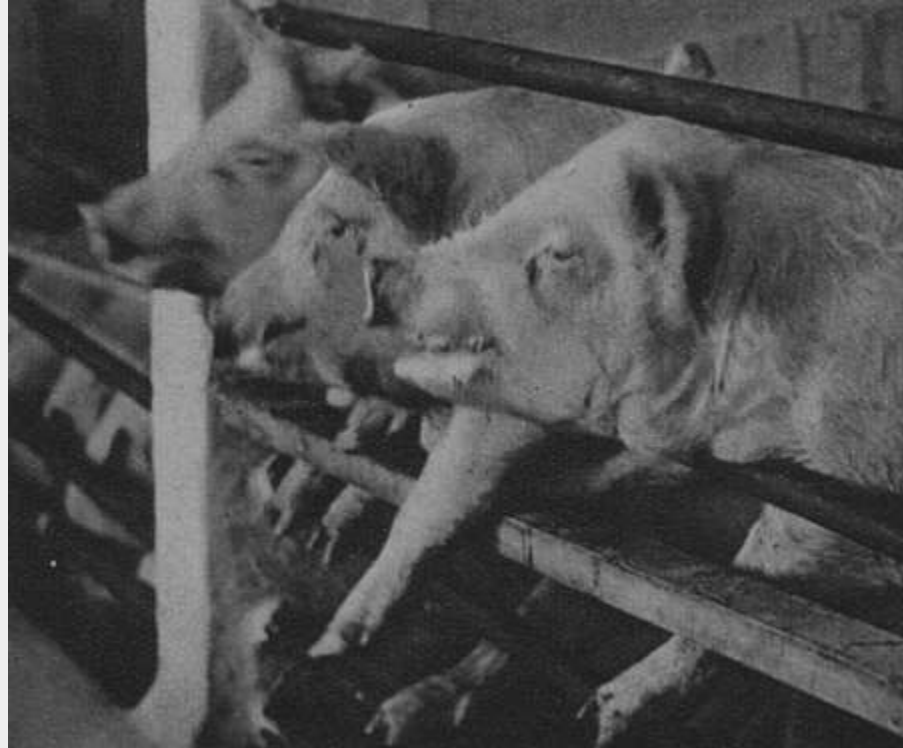


Sow and her piglets by the lake. *Sika - Suomen Sianjalostusyhdistyksen tiedonantoja 165. 1962.*

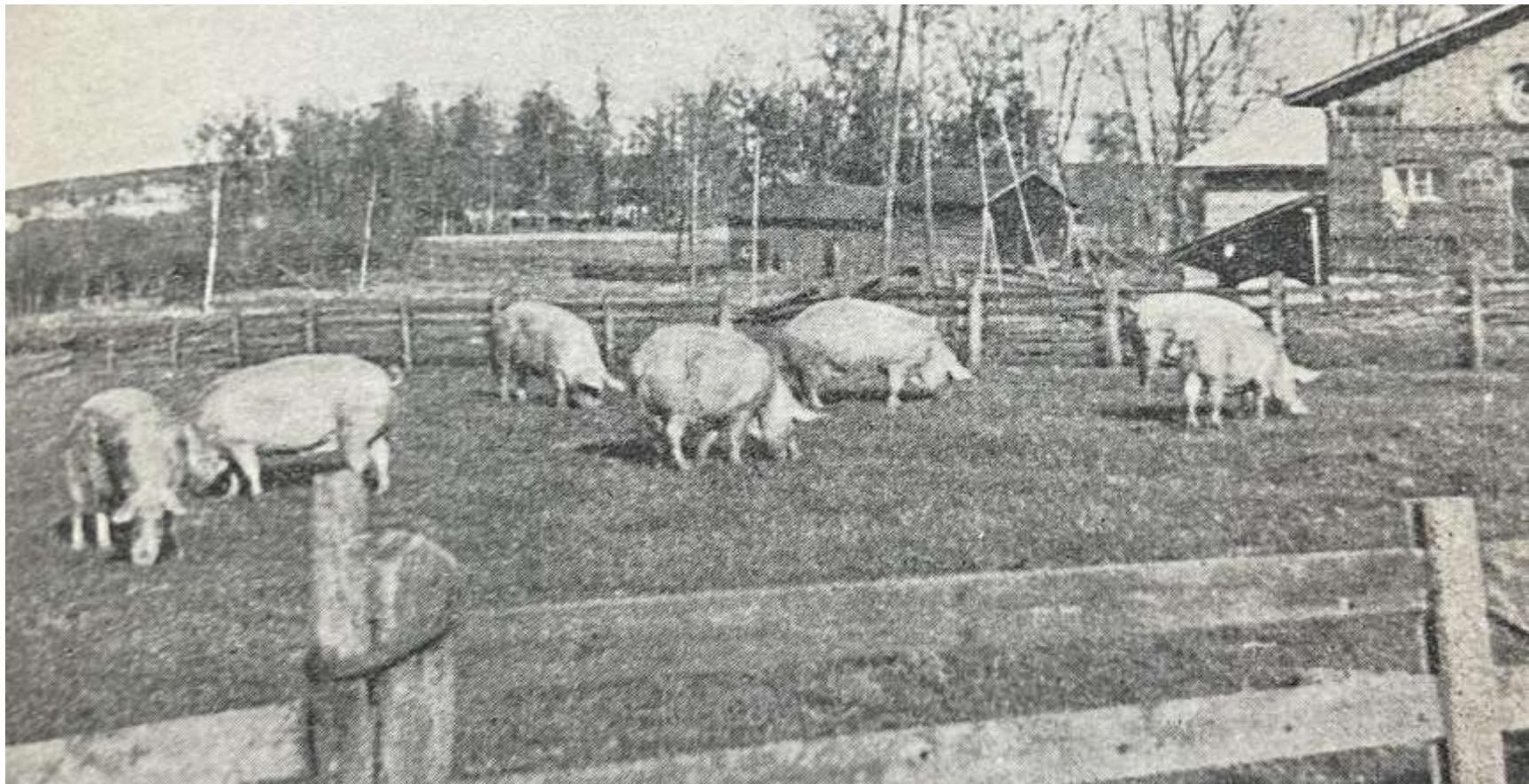
## Sick pigs

- “In grand piggeries built from stone, sick pigs drag their hind legs...”
- “Mineral deficiencies are obvious. It is evidenced by gnawed food troughs and pen walls, as well as lame and messy-haired animal.”
- “Piglets have nasal discharge, they sneeze, and soon they start to cough.”

“Piglets must be on pasture during summertime. If, in particular, the piggery is cemented, it is hard to manage without pigs having access to pasture, and cough will eventually appear in a piggery.”



Pigs waiting for dinner at the Pig Husbandry Experiment Station. Enzootic pneumonia of swine was a chronic problem in its piggery. *Suomen Kuvalehti* 12/1936.



Grazing sows. *Sika - Suomen Sianjalostusyhdistyksen tiedonantoja 111. 1951.*



A dairy cooperative's piggery  
in Vihti. Pigs receive their feed.  
1954.

Photo: Pekka Kyytinen. The  
Picture Collections of the Finnish  
Heritage Agency.

## Interested in reading more?

Eeva Nikkilä; Building a Nest in Human-Built Spaces: Tracing the Experiences of Finnish Sows, c. 1900–1930s. *Animal History* 1 March 2025; 1 (1): 52–70.

<https://research.utu.fi/converis/portal/detail/Publication/484339794>

Nikkilä E. Spring piglets or autumn piglets? Negotiating the role of nature in the spaces and practices of raising piglets in Finland, c. 1910s–30s. *Rural History*. 2026;37(1):151-164.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793325100046>

Nikkilä E. Sikojen eletyt tilat ja paikat. Sikalat, siankasvatus ja sianhoito 1900-luvun alun Suomessa. 2024. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-29-9805-0>