This paper explores how boundaries and relationships between human and animal are practiced in the field of translational neonatology in which animals are seen as central resources for bringing together the bench and the bedside within the same scientific framework. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a Danish pig laboratory and in a Danish neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) I investigate the spatial and conceptual processes through which the pig is made into a resource for human infant life and through which questions of resource prioritization enter life-and-death decision-making in the NICU. The ethnography illuminates how aspects of the work of imagining, claiming, making and administering resources are open to experience yet actively unknown or silenced in specific contexts. In the spaces of translational neonatology the “unknown known” concerns the possible existential equality between piglet and human researcher; in decision-making in the NICU the “unknown known” concerns the selection of the worthy and the less worthy lives, what we may think of as the inescapable existential inequality between infants. While it may be that paradigmatic scientific shifts have come to question human uniqueness and a fixed boundary between human and animal, daily practices in the field of translational neonatology muddle this picture. The study demonstrates that that within a translational framework in which the pig has moved closer to the human, asymmetries and disconnections between species and spaces are essential when bringing the pig into the clinic and managing resources in the NICU.

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