



***Welcome to the September edition of our newsletter – a little more welcome rain in places, but the heat continues!***

## **Heat Stress in Sows**

The recent hot weather will have had many adverse effects on sows and gilts. Some Spanish research helps us to put some figures on this.

142 farms representing 1.7 million matings were analysed.

Sow records were split into 2 groups based on maximum temperatures in the week prior to weaning or week of insemination with 27°C being used as the cut off for the two groups.

Sows weaned in summer (July – September) had on average 0.1 – 1.5 days longer weaned to service interval and a farrowing rate reduced by 1.2 – 5.5% compared to April and November.

The critical period seems to be 1 – 3 weeks preweaning on wean to service interval, and temperature in weeks 2 and 3 after insemination on farrowing rate. The preweaning temperatures are probably having their effect through reduced feed intake, post service on implantation.

Interestingly, gilts and 1st litter sows are more sensitive to these temperature effects than older sows, where effects were seen 3 – 8°C lower than in older sows.

## **ASF- A Polish Perspective, Dawid Karpiesuik MRCVS**

African Swine Fever (ASF) is a viral disease affecting porcine animals, both domestic and wild species, but it is harmless to humans. ASF remains a serious epidemiologic and economic concern in the pig industry in Europe.

Since the first case of ASF in Poland in 2014 (first in wild boars in February, and 5 months later in pigs), the approach towards that disease has changed.

Firstly, the general opinion was that the ASF could affect mainly small farms with poor

biosecurity, particularly farms which were situated close to the forest, in areas highly populated by wild boars. For the first 3 years this was true, ASF affected mainly small farms, where pigs were not the main source of income and owners did not focus on the biosecurity and prevention against it. It was mainly because ASF was present in non-pig producing regions, with not many pig farms. With the spread of the disease in Poland among wild boars it started to affect bigger farms. Disease spread from the north-east of the country to the south and later on to the west, slowly affecting the rest of the country, finally occurring in the Wielkopolska province, which is the largest pig producing region in Poland.

In the first years, the spread of ASF among wild boars was slow and described as a low, "natural" way, at a rate of 1-1.5 miles per month. And then human-mediated transfer of the virus caused that virus to jump at a rate of hundreds of miles. Human activity is the most unpredictable factor, which is also crucial in the new episodes of ASF in wild boar observed in the areas thus far free from this disease. It is wild boars that are the main reservoir of the virus, and they are the main threat to the spread of disease to pigs.

ASF is present in 13 out of 16 provinces in Poland, up to date. Since 2014 it has been found at nearly 450 farm sites in Poland. The vast majority of these farms were relatively small, almost 350 of them had fewer than 100 pigs. Most of the outbreaks were located in areas that have a high concentration of ASF infections in wild boars. Typically, most ASF farm outbreaks take place in the warmer summer months.

To limit the spread of the disease specific rules were implemented: - all the pig farms have to meet biosecurity requirements, with biosecurity veterinary assessments-restricted zones were introduced, differentiated by the ASF epidemiological situation and proximity to the outbreak in pigs or in wild boars-pigs from restricted zones prior to the sale have to be sampled followed by veterinary health certificate

Among those procedures the most important for the farmers is biosecurity. It is not only the most effective prevention tool against ASF, but also against any other disease too. And it is the thing on which an individual farmer has the biggest influence and control.

We will come back to the topic of biosecurity in the future.

### Vesicular Disease

As most people will know, there was a case of vesicular disease reported in Norfolk in late June this year. Due to correct reporting to the APHA, investigations were completed quickly and efficiently that were able to rule out notifiable vesicular diseases like foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), swine vesicular disease and vesicular stomatitis.

Whilst this is excellent news, we should always remain vigilant to the clinical signs of vesicular diseases so suspect cases can be promptly reported and investigated to minimise the impact FMD can have not only on the UK pig, cattle, and sheep herds, but also on the UK food export market; costing the UK Economy millions of pounds.

FMD is a viral disease that is characterised by sudden lameness and vesicular lesions (blisters) around the snout, mouth, and feet. The lameness can affect a single foot or multiple with the vesicles being found either along the top of the hooves and accessory digits (coronary band) or between the claws in the interdigital space. Once burst, the vesicles can either heal rapidly (more commonly seen with vesicles of the snout and mouth) or can form erosions and deep ulcerations (more commonly on the feet).

FMD is a highly contagious disease that primarily infects cloven hoofed animals: cows, sheep, goats, deer, and pigs, however, has also been known to infect animals like rats and hedgehogs. It can be spread by direct or indirect contact (fomites) with infected animals, as well as through respiratory aerosol (small droplets of fluid produced when breathing) where it has been known to travel up to 30 miles with the correct weather conditions. Fomites are physical objects that can carry the virus from one animal to another, for example a feed trough or welly boot. Through these methods it can be seen how quickly FMD can spread through a unit and even to surrounding units.

Cases of multiple pigs developing sudden and severe lameness over a short period of time with obvious vesicles/lesions on their feet should always be reported to the APHA as suspect FMD/vesicular disease. In England, cases should be reported to DEFRA Rural Services on 03000 200 301; in Wales, contact 0300 303 8266 and in Scotland, contact your local Field Services Office.

It can be very daunting for farmers to report suspect cases of FMD which is understandable considering the effect the last outbreak had on the UK cow, sheep and pig herds back in 2001. However, we all have our part to play in making sure that a similar outbreak does not occur again, which can be done through regular inspections of your animals for lameness and foot/mouth/snout lesions as well as prompt reporting to the correct authorities so the disease can be swiftly investigated and dealt with before it can spread to other farms.

#### YOU ARE NOT ON YOUR OWN.

These are the hardest times the pig industry has experienced for over 20 years, and everyone is under incredible pressure. Please remember that there is help if you need it, and do not be afraid to reach out.

RABI is a leading farming charity and has announced immediate availability of additional support to anyone who needs it. They have a dedicated, professionally trained team who understand the pressures and challenges you face.

If you, or anyone you know could benefit from talking to RABI, or request a call back from a councillor, the charity can be contacted 24 hours a day on a confidential free helpline.

**RABI 24-hour helpline: 0800 188 4444**

[help@rabi.org.uk](mailto:help@rabi.org.uk)

### NPA Allied Industry Member of the Year

Garth has been nominated! Thank you so much. Please could we ask that you give us your vote? More details can be found on [NPA Allied Industry Member of the Year Award | National Pig Awards](#)