

# THE PIG ISSUE

April 2012



## New laws on pig accommodation

Many of you will be aware that there are new laws for pig farms coming into force throughout Europe at the beginning of next year. The headline story is the partial ban on sow stalls for which many European farms will not be ready, despite having several years warning. However, there are a number of changes that may affect many farms in the UK and need action now.

Some of the requirements are very straightforward (such as new slat widths) but others are currently ambiguous (such as the floor requirements for dry sows). The legislation has been in force in the UK for all **new** buildings since 2003 but will apply to **ALL** pig buildings from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013.

The new legal slat widths and gaps are laid out on page 30 of the current Red Tractor Assurance standards (dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011) which can be found on the internet at [www.assuredpigs.co.uk](http://www.assuredpigs.co.uk) by clicking on "Standards" on the left hand side. The new space requirements for gilts, dry sows and boars can be found on page 31, sections HF.6.2-6.6. In addition to the space requirements in this section, the new legislation states that boar pens must be sited and constructed so as to allow the boar to turn round and to hear, smell and see other pigs. The unobstructed floor space for growing pigs can be found in appendix HF.6 on page 67. We have summarised these figures on a separate sheet (enclosed).

These measurements in the Standards are identical to those in the new legislation, so if your farm cannot match them you will be non-compliant with the assurance scheme. And please also remember that these are all **minimum** legal requirements – production, health and welfare may often be improved by exceeding these figures.

The National Pig Association (NPA) and DEFRA are keen to work together with farmers to ensure compliance across the country by next year. If you are not compliant and are concerned about achieving compliance by 2013, please contact us at Garth so we can liaise with NPA about how to resolve the problem.

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## New virus of livestock

The livestock industry has been in the headlines again recently with the discovery of a new and virulent viral disease. Schmallenberg Virus was identified in Germany at the end of last year as the cause of deformed calves and lambs as well as general malaise in cattle and sheep in Germany, Belgium and Holland. Its presence has since been confirmed in the UK, probably carried to our shores from Europe by midges. As yet there has been no indication that it can infect other species, but the authorities have said that the risk to humans cannot yet be excluded. On this basis we should not be complacent about the possible risk to pigs.

## GARTHS TOPICAL TIP

While it seems early to be discussing summer infertility many herds have predictable dips in fertility associated with seasonal (or unseasonal!) weather. Gilts may be delivered 2 – 3 months before anticipated service dates dependent on the farm management so leave plenty of time to analyse last few years performance to predict drops in performance and speak to your breeding stock supplier in plenty of time to organise extra replacements.

(courtesy of ACMC)

## Antibiotic resistance

Momentum is building in the discussion about the use of antibiotics in farm animals in relation to the development of drug resistance in bacteria, particularly those of importance in human medicine. There is a raft of proposals and planned high level European meetings which could radically alter our use of these drugs on farm, the most extreme of these measures being the banning of antibiotics for prophylaxis. This would mean that antibiotics could only be given to animals that were sick and not, for example, to penmates who were exposed to the same disease but were not yet showing signs of illness.

The veterinary profession is concerned that this could have an adverse effect on animal welfare, let alone economics, and is fighting to preserve our right to prescribe for animals as we see fit. This argument will be aided by a recent study from the University of Glasgow that suggests resistance in human bacteria is not caused by the use of antibiotics on farm. The Glasgow team compared isolates of *Salmonella* from people and farms in Scotland and found that there were significance differences in the resistance traits of the two populations of the bacteria. They suggest that the European authorities review the basis for their proposals on antibiotic use on farms.

Even if this is the case, it is still sensible to use antibiotics sensibly and properly on farm. Even if human populations are relatively unaffected, inappropriate use could still lead to specific resistance problems on your farm which could cause unwanted trouble. With guidance from your vet, aim to use all antibiotics on farm (including feed and water medication) for the correct time at the correct dose, also ensuring that the most appropriate antibiotic is used.

## Rules on the transport of pigs

While the transport of pigs is topical due to the recent arrival of compulsory electronic movement licences (eAML2) at the beginning of April, here are some other transport issues that have come to light recently within the practice:

- 🕒 The movement of pigs between premises within a Sole Occupancy Authority (SOA) still requires an eAML2. Even if you are shuttling back and forth moving the same batch of pigs because they cannot all fit in the trailer at once, **a separate licence** is required for each single movement.
- 🕒 **All pigs being transported** must be identified in some way. Pigs already ear-tagged are fine as they are, but any other pigs must have some sort of mark on them that must last for the duration of the journey. This includes freshly weaned pigs moving to a nursery site. A spray marker dot or line is fine.
- 🕒 It is required by law that any vehicle transporting livestock between premises must be cleaned and disinfected between loads. The only exception to this is if there are multiple movements between the same two premises **on the same day**.

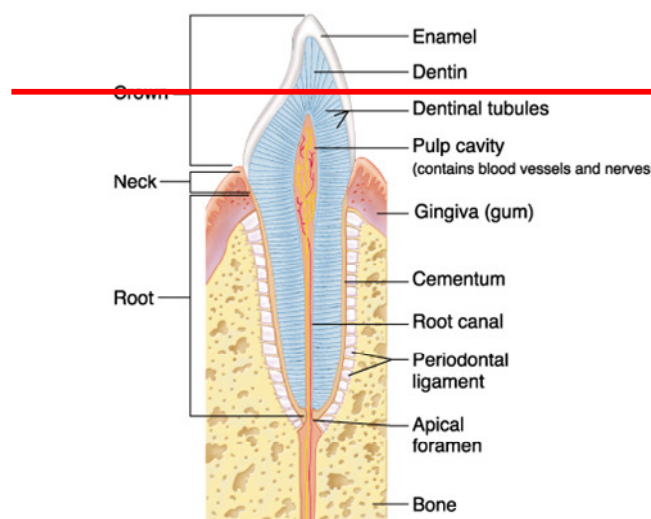
## Tooth grinding versus teeth clipping

The Red tractor Assurance Standards Manual for Pigs states that:

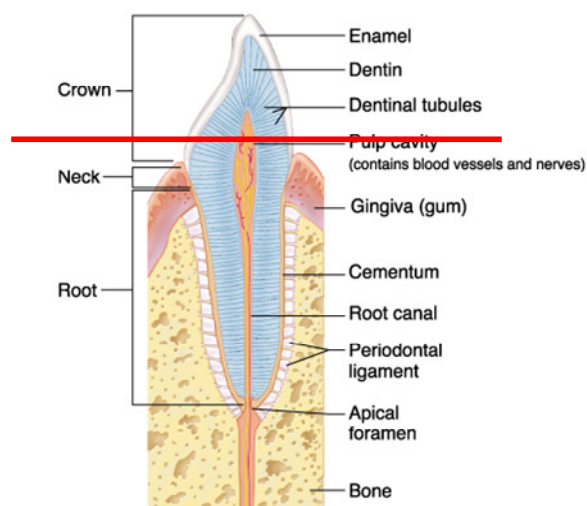
**“Tooth clipping or grinding must only be carried out in accordance with the following:**

- ⌚ Decisions to undertake the reduction of sharp corner teeth must be made at the individual litter level rather than as a uniform policy across the whole herd.
- ⌚ Only the minimal removal of the tips of sharp corner teeth is permitted and the pulp cavity must not be exposed.
- ⌚ Only properly trained, named individuals may perform the operation and a record must be held of those individuals and their training.
- ⌚ The same equipment must not be used to undertake teeth clipping and tail docking.
- ⌚ There must be a specific farm policy included with the veterinary health plan which covers these points.

**The use of grinders is to be encouraged as these allow better control of the amount of the teeth which is removed and are less likely to cause splintering of the teeth”**



Picture 1



Picture 2

**Picture 1** – the red line shows the level to which you should remove the tips of the “eye” teeth of the piglet.

**Picture 2** – the red line shows the level to which teeth are commonly clipped.

When the pulp cavity is exposed, there is a risk that environmental bacteria have a ready access to the blood stream, and this often results in joint or other infections.

When teeth are clipped, there is the additional danger of fragmentation of the tooth, with sharp edges being left behind that cause damage to the faces of other pigs and the sow's udder.

Teeth grinders are small, lightweight, battery operated and have a guard to protect against damage to surrounding soft tissue.

## Garth news

### Goodbye to Riki



Unfortunately Riki, as most of you know her, has left Garth. She, along with her partner Tom, have made the decision to return home to Germany in order to further both her professional and personal life.

She has found a role with Boehringer Ingelheim, the company behind Circoflex. This will involve trial work so hopefully we will see her back in the UK occasionally working both with Garth and with customer farms suitable for trials.

A number of us saw her off at a leaving party she organised at her house. I am sure you will join us in wishing Riki every success for the future in both her career and her personal life.

### Hello to Louise



Louise is our latest addition to the vet team at Garth. She has joined us in April to specialise in pig medicine after working in mixed practice for 2 years. Louise has a keen interest in pig medicine, having originated from a farrow

finish pig farm in Northern Ireland.

She is particularly keen on optimising herd performance, health planning, disease investigation and pathology.

Louise is 28, qualified in 2010 and took an animal biology degree before she studied vet medicine

Her interests are hockey, swimming, hill walking and taking part in charity events such as marathons and skydives

### Gemma Morton



We are delighted to announce that as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 Gemma has accepted the offer of a partnership in Garth.

Gemma has been at Garth for over 4 years and this represents a strong commitment to the business and is welcomed by all at this end.

### New environmental enrichment toy

The Porci-chew pig toy has been launched by East Riding Farm Services recently and has proved to be a success on the farms where it has been used. It is made from a hard wearing plastic and shaped in a way that provides interest for the pig, the plastic form being suspended from a chain. It is also scented to provide aromatic stimulus to the pig and comes in two aromas. The product appears to doing a good job both in terms of amusement and longevity.



The product is available either through ERFS directly or through Garth.