

# THE PIG ISSUE



August 2012

## BPEX Welfare Outcomes Project will mean increased time on Veterinary Visits

Many of you may be aware that Red Tractor, and probably other assurance organisations in England and Wales, plan to adopt some of the scoring and measurements taken on farm during the Real Welfare Outcomes Project pilot studies. In practice this will require us to select various pens of pigs, both dry sows and finishers, and measure certain criteria (lameness, tail lesions, body lesions, hospitalisation, enrichment use) in this selected sub-population.

It is estimated, depending on farm type and layout, that this procedure may take between 20 and 45 minutes on each farm. On the pilot studies in which we have been involved, only a few farms fell into the shortest time period. Whilst this amount of time may not seem considerable within a five or six hour visit to a large farrow-to-finish operation, it is obviously a large percentage of the time on smaller farms and on units belonging to multi-site operations.

The proposal is that these welfare assessments will be conducted during or at the end of your routine veterinary quarterly visit and that critically the pig producer will pay for the increased time required for the visit. If the time on farm is not increased, this could detract from the primary focus of our input which is to improve health, welfare and productivity on the unit and consequently its financial efficiency.

The Real Welfare Outcomes Project and its incorporation into Red Tractor has been welcomed by many larger producers, largely due to its potential political advantages. By taking the initiative now we may be able to prevent the implementation by the EU of similar, but possibly more onerous, welfare inspections in the future.

Its implications in terms of costs and veterinary time need to be understood by all producers and planned for accordingly.

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## British Sausage Week 5-11 November 2012

British Sausage week, which is organised by BPEX and the British Sausage Appreciation Society, will run from 5-11 November 2012.



The theme will be 'Stand up for British Bangers'. The aim is to create valuable publicity and increase demand for British pork. Last year's campaign increased sausage sales by 15% (compared with the previous four-weekly average) by around £2m in value.



Retailers, butchers, processors and manufacturers are invited to enter their best sausages. Closing date for entries is 26 August.

Winners will be announced during British Sausage Week. More details and competition entry forms can be downloaded at <http://porkforbutchers.bpex.org.uk>

**Reminder of New Legal Requirements for all Pig Accommodation from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 –  
EXISTING and NEW BUILDS!  
Farm assured or not**

**Space Requirements for Sows and Gilts**

		Group Size		
		5 or less	6-39	40 or more
Minimum total unobstructed floor area per:	Served gilt	<b>1.8m<sup>2</sup></b> (19.5 sq ft)	<b>1.64m<sup>2</sup></b> (17.7 sq ft)	<b>1.48m<sup>2</sup></b> (15.9sq ft)
	Sow	<b>2.48m<sup>2</sup></b> (26.8 sq ft)	<b>2.25m<sup>2</sup></b> (24.3 sq ft)	<b>2.03m<sup>2</sup></b> (21.9sq ft)
Minimum continuous solid floor area, of which a maximum of 15% is reserved for drainage openings, per:	Served gilt	<b>0.95m<sup>2</sup></b> (10.3sq ft)		
	Sow	<b>1.3m<sup>2</sup></b> (14.0sq ft)		
Minimum length of pen sides:	Sows and gilts	<b>2.4m</b> (7.9ft)	<b>2.8m</b> (9.2ft)	

It has been confirmed the area occupied by feed or free-access stalls can be included as part of the 'unobstructed' floor area.

Internal pen divisions will not invoke shortest side rule – i.e. just overall pen dimensions count.

**Dimensions for Concrete Slats**

	Void Width (Maximum)	Slat Width (Minimum)
Piglets (birth – Weaning)	11mm (no tolerance)	50mm
Weaners (weaning – 10 weeks old)	14mm (2mm tolerance)	50mm
Rearing Pigs (10 weeks – finishing/serving)	18mm (3mm tolerance)	80mm
Gilts after service and sows	20mm (3mm tolerance)	80mm

**Changes to the ZNCP**

From 1st July 2012, meat juice testing for Salmonella antibodies has been suspended. The Zoonosis National Control Plan (ZNCP) will now be centred on the new on-line Salmonella risk assessment tool. Producers will be asked a series of questions about their farm which will be analysed resulting in control suggestions. The aim of this will be for vets and producers to use the assessment outcomes to develop a meaningful and effective salmonella control plan.

## Countering the effect of feed price escalation

Feed prices are high and look to remain so for the foreseeable future. This is the result of the worst drought conditions in the United States since 1956, and drought also around the Black Sea and in Argentina where soya yields are down by 18%. The effect of this will be to raise pig production costs globally, not just in the UK.

Currently BPEX estimates total feed costs (including sow feed) to be 109p/kg deadweight, or 63% of total production cost and 78% of variable costs. Pig producers can do little to influence world feed prices, but as pig production is largely about the efficient conversion of feed into saleable meat there is a lot that can be done to mitigate against the effect of rising feed prices.

### FCR and its effect on cost of production

Wean to finish (7-104 kg)	Average	Top third	Top 10%
FCR	2.44	2.28	2.12
Composite feed cost/tonne at forecast November 2012 prices	£274	£274	£274
Feed cost/kg dead weight	89p	83p	77p
Feed cost/78kg dead weight pig	£69.42	£64.74	£60.06

Based on the BPEX feed cost estimates, a 0.1 improvement in FCR is equivalent to a cost saving of £2.93 per finished pig. Agrosoft data indicates that the average FCR of the top third (in overall performance terms) of pig producers is 0.16 better than the national average with the top 10% a further 0.16 above that, leading to premiums per pig of £4.68 and £9.36 respectively.

### Making the right decisions

During tough times a common tendency is either to cut costs or do nothing. Both scenarios are understandable, but from a business perspective this can often be disastrous. For example, in order to save cost a pig producer may decide to stop using a piglet vaccine which costs £1/pig. But if, as result of this action, mortality increases and growth rate drops causing FCR to rise by 0.1 then the net loss now becomes £1.93/pig - wrong decision!



**Girth measurement is a quick and easy tool to estimate body weight and track the growth of pigs. For more information contact the practice.**

### Areas to assess to optimise FCR

- ⌚ Avoid feed wastage - repair feeders, prevent bird/rodent losses.
- ⌚ Adjust hoppers - correct feed flow rates. Is enough feed available or too much?
- ⌚ Adequate hopper space/pig - 5cm at 30 kg and 7cm at 90kg for ad-lib feeders or 1 feeder space/14 pigs.
- ⌚ Appropriate feeds - is the diet changeover occurring at the correct weights? Avoid over-feeding expensive diets.
- ⌚ Diet formulation - maintain the specification but formulate using alternative lower cost ingredients if available.
- ⌚ Bin hygiene - to avoid feed deterioration. When were the feed bins last cleaned and fumigated?
- ⌚ Feed quality - check deliveries for dust, variability, contamination and moisture level.
- ⌚ Adequate water availability - water flow rate of at least 1.0 litres/minute for finishers and a minimum of 1 nipple drinker per 15 pigs on ad-lib feed.
- ⌚ House temperature - aim to reduce variability/fluctuation and ensure that actual temperatures are correct for the weight of pigs housed - too cold or too hot both adversely affect FCR.
- ⌚ Improve air quality - carry out a ventilation 'health check' then adjust and clean inlets and fans as necessary. Maintain clean-down procedures and All in - All out production
- ⌚ Check pig health - via BPHS reports and clinical inspection by your vet. Review herd health programs and update procedures.
- ⌚ Monitor performance - during the growing/finishing period check weight for age and feed intakes. Respond to areas of recorded deficiency.

It's going to be tough but winners never quit - and quitters never win!

**Starlings start swarming from August onwards and possibly spread disease onto your unit. Bird proofing all buildings will massively reduce the risk**

### Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOA)

To help support specific TB control measures in cattle as from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOA) applications or requests for the addition of new holdings to an existing SOA are no longer available.

Therefore the movement of a pig onto a premises will trigger a 20 day standstill on any pigs, and a 6 day standstill on sheep, cattle or goats on those premises. The movement of cattle, sheep or goats onto premises on which one or more pigs are kept will trigger a 6 day standstill on those pigs.

Existing SOAs continue to be valid.

### The Risk of Autumn Infertility

It is that time of year again when the day length is rapidly shortening and the day/night temperature is variable - possible triggers for autumn infertility. Sows and gilts served from mid-September to late October are the animals most at risk. Autumn infertility can manifest itself through a delayed onset to oestrus, increased return rate (normally with regular returns) and abortion in later pregnancy. Practical interventions to try to limit the effects of autumn infertility should include:

- ⌚ Keep sows and gilts at a comfortable temperature and avoid draughts.
- ⌚ Increase services by 10%
- ⌚ If home breeding, increase % of damline serves so an increased gilt supply will be available this time of year.
- ⌚ Reinstate winter feed curve.
- ⌚ Consider a significant increase in feed level (25 to 33%) during the first 6 weeks post service for serves July to September.
- ⌚ Provide 14-16 hours of light per day (at least 250 lux).
- ⌚ Provide plenty of physical boar contact.

Remember that not all fertility problems at this time of year are attributable to autumn infertility – infectious causes or management issues can also contribute. It is worthwhile reviewing your breeding records and service management with your vet.