

THE PIG ISSUE

August 2013



New rules on pig euthanasia

The latest version of the Red Tractor Assurance (RTA) Pig Scheme standards sets out new requirements for emergency on-farm slaughter of pigs. This term refers specifically to pigs which are deemed to require euthanasia on welfare grounds. From April 2014, under the RTA standards, all stockmen who euthanase pigs must be both trained and assessed as competent in the appropriate method (which varies according to the age of pig). Both training and assessment must be recorded in the veterinary health plan of each farm.

The training may be carried out by various bodies, including the farm's veterinary practice. In association with BPEX and the Humane Slaughter Association (HSA), Garth are running a series of 'Euthanasia Workshops' which will cover the training aspect of the new requirement. Attendance is strongly recommended! Please contact Rachel at Garth Partnership for further details.

An assessment, which must include a practical component, can then be undertaken on-farm by your vet or one of the other vets in the practice. A Certificate of Competence will be issued to those people successfully completing both stages. Under RTA rules, only people who hold this certificate will be authorised to carry out emergency slaughter from next April. Please note that these documents are not a legal requirement, and are not to be confused with the DEFRA-issued documents of the same name which will soon replace the slaughterman's licence.

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The *Trust the Tractor* banner campaign has been rolled out by Red Tractor and AHDB which will be run concurrently with the NFU's own banner blitz. It forms part of the Buy British campaign and aims to encourage the UK public to trust the Red Tractor.

Any pig producers who have a field bordering a main road or other suitable display area are asked to contact Clancy Smith (clancy.smith@bpex.ahdb.org.uk or telephone 02476 478792).

Garth would like to congratulate Tony Wright of Yorkshire-based Shedden Farms for completing the BPEX Professional Managers Development Scheme and for also scooping the Student of the Year Award. Well done Tony

Heat stress

Heat is not something we have had too many problems with in the UK over the last few years, but at the time of writing a heatwave has been forecast so it is time to consider ventilation again. We mentioned this at the beginning of last winter where the aim was to ensure adequate clean air for our pigs while keeping them warm. But pigs can also get too hot, and both welfare and performance will suffer as a result.

The temperature range in which the pig functions optimally is called the **thermoneutral zone**. This zone varies for different ages (and, therefore, sizes) of pig as shown by the examples in the table below:

Age/weight of pig	Thermoneutral zone (°C)
Sow	10-21
Newborn	32-35
Nursery (5-14kg)	24-29
Nursery (23-34kg)	16-21
Grower (34-82)	13-21
Finisher	10-21

So the challenge in summer is to keep growing pigs and sows below 21°C, although it is important to note that these temperatures apply in still, dry conditions to exposed pigs. The presence of straw bedding, wind and moisture will alter the temperatures that can be well tolerated. This is important for outdoor pigs when the environmental temperature cannot be controlled. Shade should be provided along with wallows. Getting wet allows the pig to tolerate significantly higher temperatures.

This principle can also be used in indoor systems by installing sprayers or misters over pens. They should usually be located over the dunging areas to help keep the rest of the pen clean.

Fans should be checked and cleaned to make sure they are working efficiently. Air inlets and outlets should also be checked and cleaned to ensure they are not limiting airflow. In some houses and straw yards, ridge tiles can be removed or altered to allow improved egress of hot air through the roof. Fresh air should then be drawn in through the sides of the building. Even though this air may be warm, the fact that it is moving over the pigs will help to cool them.



BPEX Innovation Fund is looking for new and innovative ideas to award grants to pig producers or businesses who have a good idea but not enough cash to try it out and develop it. Ideas are very variable so all plans considered.

Further information available from your regional BPEX Knowledge Transfer (KT) manager.

Uniferon is now available in 200ml and you save £1 per 100ml if you buy 200mls



Ways in which growth rate can be improved

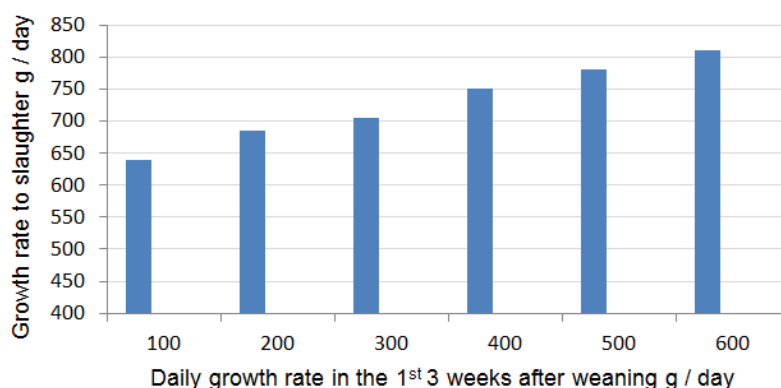
The previous two articles in this series have looked at why fast growth is beneficial and how growth rates can be measured; this article will cover how growth rate can be improved.

Feed intake

Growth rate is primarily determined by feed intake, quite simply we want pigs to eat more – and they most certainly do not live up to their image of being ‘greedy as a pig’. Using typical commercial diets pigs should eat about 3% of their body weight per day, ideally slightly more when below 30kg, so a 30kg would eat 1kg/day and a 100 kg pig 3kg/day. So the challenge is to get pigs at each stage of production to eat more feed.

‘Well begun is half-done’ – this term is very true, - getting pigs off to a really good start in life is so important to lifetime growth rate. Whilst birth weight and colostrum intakes are vital to a good start in life, the experience of consuming creep feed pre-weaning is just as important – target 0.5kg creep feed/pig pre-weaning. Trials have shown that that for every 100g eaten/pig pre-weaning that weaning weight increases by 0.2kg, but more importantly growth rate increases by 30g/day in the 3 weeks post weaning.

Being a good creep feeder is an article in itself; suffice to say that if it is done well then pig performance responds accordingly; the graph below relates to trials by SCA involving 5000 pigs from birth to finish.



Factors affecting feed intake

Health – affects pigs ‘attitude’ towards feed in a number of ways; unhealthy pigs are morbid due to elevated body temperature and toxins from infection. An increased immune response costs the pig in terms of energy available for growth. Managing the current health status through discussion with your vet and implementation of a proactive health plan is a good approach to take.

Genetics – there are significant differences between genotypes; the use of sire-lines with proven intake / growth rate performance is a worthwhile investment.

Feed quality – the correct nutritional specification matched to the growth potential (health x genotype) and stage of growth of the pig is important; a single feed from 30-110kg is unlikely to be efficient at all stages. Avoid low-cost raw materials with anti-nutritional/palatability components such as certain rapeseeds and soya bean sources. Mycotoxins such as fusarium and ergot reduce appetite and feed utilisation.

Avoidance of mouldy feed through good storage bin hygiene and the use of mould inhibitors are also important for maintaining palatability and intake.

Hopper management – pigs have a good sense of smell – that is how they locate feed, so by ensuring that the feeding area is free from stale or mouldy feed, straw or faeces will help to ensure feed aroma is good and intakes are high.

Generally circular feeders are easier to keep clean as they do not have corners – relative to long ad lib feeders. Having adequate feed space is also important – allow a minimum of 5cm/35 kg pig and 7cm for a 90kg pig, so/2m of feed space that is 40 x 35kg pigs and 28 x 90kg pigs – how many producers put in extra hoppers as pigs grow?



Other key areas of production

Stocking rates, water quality and intake together with the provision of adequate ventilation and room temperatures within the pigs' thermo-neutral range are other essential components worth checking in order to maximise feed intake and growth.

If you want a review of your finishing pig performance and ways in which to improve it – please speak to your Garth Partnership vet or contact the practice.

Finisher buildings guide

BPEX's 'Finisher Pig Buildings Design and Build – a blueprint for English farms' is now available for producers. It contains information regarding building planning, construction and management of finishing accommodation.

Can be downloaded from

<http://www.bpex.org.uk/environment-hub/pig-housing-development/finisherbuildingsblueprint.aspx>.

Training successes on Garth's Pig Production training

Congratulations to 3 of our client's stockpersons for successfully completing and attaining competency in NPTC Stage 2 Pig Production



Ryan Wilson using a needleless injector

Ryan Wilson is employed on an 750 sow breeder finisher unit owned by Rick Buckle and family in Holderness. Ryan is primarily responsible for the rearing herd involving pigs from weaning through to 45kg, he also provides cover in the farrowing houses, service area and also finishing herd when needed. The high performance unit uses a 3-week batch system so team work is essential to cope with the peaks of labour demand on specific weeks.

Ryan feels that by attending the training courses that he has a much better understanding of how and why certain tasks are done, this has greatly improved his overall confidence and given him a better awareness of pig performance and how to improve it.

Rick Buckle commented that training is very much an on-going process and that the course had given Ryan a very good overall understanding of pig production, also that he was showing plenty of initiative and raises ideas for improvement.



Mark Denness in a weaner house that he converted from an insulated container using his engineering skills

Mark Denness is employed on the family farm of C & M Denness Ltd which is an arable/pig farm with 200 sows producing finishing pigs at Holme-on-Spalding Moor. Mark already has a degree in agricultural engineering but wanted to get up to speed quickly in pig production as he has recently returned to the farm – so the training courses proved an ideal way to do this.

Mark felt that the courses gave a comprehensive cover of all aspects of indoor pig production both in technical and practical terms.

Michael Jones works for Smith Bros. at Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire on a 350 sow unit with pigs finished on a separate unit. Michael felt that he benefitted by hearing about some new techniques as well as different ways of doing existing routines more effectively – colostrum management being a point in case as well as increasing water intake in lactating sows. These techniques have helped to improve weaning weights and improve Michael's skills and confidence.

Michael was keen to take the NPTC stage 2 Pig Production proficiency tests – so gaining a recognised qualification.

If you or your staff are interested in attending any of this coming season's training sessions please contact Christine Watts 01262 488323

2013 Pig & Poultry Marketing Awards

The 2013 Pig & Poultry Marketing Awards took place at the London Marriott County Hall right on the river on the 9th May 2013.

The Awards are designed to reward production excellence, marketing communications and knowledge transfer. They also provide a great opportunity to celebrate innovation in this industry, a sector that is possibly more innovative than other parts of the agricultural sector. The pig and poultry industry has, without subsidies, created some fantastic businesses, *Pig & Poultry Marketing* magazine awarded some of them for their innovation, their forward thinking attitude, and for their constant striving for the best looking, and best tasting, product, as well as the veterinary practices and marketing companies who support them. These businesses are integral in showing others the way.

Training Initiative of the Year - sponsored by Vétoquinol

WINNER - PIG INDUSTRY, Garth Partnership

While the main purpose of the business is to supply veterinary advice and products to the pig industry their submission has proved that they are also excellent trainers, getting stuck in at all levels. The practice does not just talk about training it delivers - the initiative of employing John Richardson to write and deliver pig training courses this year edged them in front in what was a particularly competitive category.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - PIG VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL, Paul Thompson, Vet at Garth Partnership

Tim Clarke of APMC Ltd nominated Paul for this award, saying "Paul and I sit down and between us come up with a topical subjects that has possibly been discussed on farm with a customer or has been brought to our attention through the trade and we then turn this into a topical note for the aid of the pig farmers. These are well received and published every month, off and on line publications carry it."