



DRIFFIELD SHOW

Welcome to Summer! We can't promise you sunshine, but we *can* promise you a warm welcome at our usual stand at the Driffield Show. Please join us for a chat and light refreshments: stand U326, usual place in the smaller second show ground opposite the craft stand. See you soon!

Lung Lesions and the Impact Over Performance

Respiratory problems have always been a major discussion point between vets and producers when assessing the performance and overall health status of a unit. A recent study done in Poland, indicated that **one percentage of affected lung volume was associated with a 0.24% reduction in lean meat content**. This is useful to quantify the impact of disease in real figures.

The main causes of lung lesions have been classified as **Porcine respiratory disease complex (PRDC)**, a chronic respiratory disease mainly affecting growing and finishing pigs, causing major economic losses in the pig industry worldwide. The prevalence of respiratory disease in pigs ranges from around 20% to 75% in any given herd. The main agents contributing to the disease complex include Enzootic Pneumonia, PRRS virus, Swine Influenza virus, *Actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae*, *Pasteurella* spp. *Strep Suis* and Glassers.

Unfortunately, due to the chronic evolution of PRDC, it is very difficult to assess its full impact during production stages, as so, a very useful tool is abattoir assessments, periodical sessions that can measure the amount of severity of lung lesions in pig herds. These can pick up levels of disease which might not be apparent from direct clinical examination of the herd, but which are having a subclinical effect on growth. In addition, from the pattern of lung disease we gain information as to potential causes.

To date, few studies have investigated the relationship between respiratory disease and pork quality. In this study it was noted that in carcasses with severe lung lesions the risk of development of meat quality abnormalities was significantly higher than in carcasses with no lesions. The respiratory lesions on swine carcass will alter the overall weight and meat quality.

Thus, improving health not only improves pig performance but value of pig to the processor.

To provide a comprehensive service to our client base, at Garth we developed an internal Pig Health Monitoring Scheme programme, accessible via a subscription or custom tailored to your need, in which our veterinary team do periodic abattoir assessments, providing critical information regarding lung and carcass quality, used to improve the herd's overall health and welfare.

If you would like to know more about the program, contact your veterinary surgeon or Fraser Claughton, commercial director at Garth, to get full details.

People First! The Key to Success



The day before the Pig & Poultry fair, CEVA hosted their 2024 Swine Symposium. Those of us in attendance got the chance to hear some thought-provoking presentations from various international speakers. One of these speakers was Javier Llorente, from 333 Academy, who spoke about staffing on pig farms, a true challenge in the UK and, as we found out, across the world.

Javier argued we need to shift our focus when looking for new staff and consider how we can adapt farms for a workforce from a non-agricultural background. The world continues to become more industrialised, with migration away from agricultural and rural communities. Pig farms cannot only compete in the labour market with other agricultural ventures for an ever-reducing pool of people with farming backgrounds. Instead, the

workforce for the farms of the future will come from industry, manufacturing, hospitality... The unsociable hours of farming are often quoted as a hindrance when seeking new employees, but the hours are no less sociable for workers at supermarkets, hotels, airports, petrol stations or your local drive-through. Staff at all these places work weekends, holidays and often nights.

Pig farming is a high cost – low margin enterprise. Feed prices may vary (though feed is never cheap!) and high investment is required in maintaining and updating facilities, adapting to new welfare regulations and keeping up with the ever-evolving sows' genetic potential. These multi-million ventures cannot afford to have staff without training and motivation – inefficiency on a pig farm is costly (empty days, returns, abortions, mortality, feed wastage...).

When the speaker asked the room to contribute with what we considered the most important skills for a farm worker, it was very apparent that employers most value skills related to attitude: motivation, passion, reliability, hard-working (and actually turning up!). As an industry, we recognise the value of the correct attitude in farm workers and understand that technical skills can be taught. But this training process is often neglected and formal learning processes for new staff can be lacking. Workers need a clearly defined role and want to know their responsibilities, whilst also having a voice that is truly listened to. A competitive and rewarding salary is essential to retain staff, but Javier urged everyone to also consider the emotional salary they are offering (support outside of work, acknowledgement in their job and efforts, suitable work/life balance, defined career plan). Though the figure that appears on a pay-slip is key, there are also other benefits that can be offered and are highly valued: travel costs, health insurance, flexibility in working hours or ongoing training (if desired – not all staff want to be promoted).

It is important to have a good farrowing rate or FCR, but this isn't possible without the right staff. Facilities for pigs need to be maintained, but also so do staff facilities. The talk ended by challenging attendees to think about how they can make farms more appealing for workers. Invest in the working environment and digitalization so pig farms are places that attract young talent and places where people want to spend time. We often discuss how to improve animal welfare, but do we spend enough time and effort on people welfare?

An industry that doesn't attract talent doesn't have a future!

The Effect of Different Drying Methods on Newborn Piglets.

A recent paper by Vande Pol *et al* measured the effect of different drying methods on rectal temperatures over first 24 hours after birth.

Colostrum uptake is essential to piglet survival. Chilled pigs are far less likely to drink adequate colostrum. Many farms are wary of traditional heat lamps behind the sow at farrowing due to fire risk.

This study compared a dry powder desiccant, a control group which were not dried, and a group dried by paper towel.

At 2 hours after birth both powder and towel groups had higher rectal temperatures than the control. Both were equally effective.

When analysing the effect by weight the low birthweight pigs showed most benefit.

It is important that pigs suckle as soon as possible after birth, chilled pigs are less vigorous. If labour resources are tight, concentrating on lightweight pigs (under 1kg) would be beneficial.

A Top Tip From Brian!

VENTILATION

This may be a bit of wishful thinking but hopefully we could have a few warmer months coming up.

Ventilation systems will only work properly and efficiently if they are kept in good condition. Checking the fans are working correctly by running them all at full power and replace any that are not working properly. Cleaning of the fan blades and vent louvres of dust and debris can improve the efficiency of the ventilation system. Checking the air inlets are working correctly and are opening fully to allow maximum air flow. Ensure the alarms are set at the right temperature and are operating the failsafe equipment. The thermostat needs to be placed as near to pig level as possible to give an accurate temperature reading.

Good ventilation in pig buildings can help with the health of the pigs and improve growth rates. It can also save money with the cost of running the ventilation system by it operating more efficiently.