THE PIG ISSUE

Garth Pig Practice Ltd

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HAPPY NEW YEAR. We hope it is healthy and prosperous for everyone.

Animal Health & Welfare Pathway – What It Means for You

Changes to farm support in England mean payments are now focused on animal health, welfare, and disease prevention, rather than direct subsidies. **The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway is designed to support livestock farmers with fully funded vet visits, grants, and disease control support.**

The scheme supports pigs, cattle, sheep, and poultry and now includes multi-species farms.

Step 1: Free Annual Vet Health & Welfare Review

- Fully funded annual vet visit for farms with 51+ pigs
- Includes disease testing and a full herd health discussion
- Provides a Vet Attestation Number (VAN) if needed for EU exports
- Payment increased as of 22 January 2026 from £557 to £648

Step 2: Capital Grants for Your Farm
(Available since March 2023)

- Part-funded grants for equipment, buildings, and housing improvements
- Investments chosen with your vet, focusing on health and welfare gains

Step 3: Extra Funding for Disease Testing & Control

(From June 2024)
Available if completed Step 1

- Supports targeted disease testing and practical vet advice
- Payment increased as of 22 January 2026 from £923 to £1,087
- (Based on 30 blood samples)

You can claim up to three Annual Reviews and three follow-up visits. To Qualify:

- Follow-ups must be done within 10 months of the Annual Review
- At least 10 months must pass between follow-ups
- Your Annual Review claim must be approved before claiming the follow-up

Step 4: Payment-by-Results (Since 2025)

- Future payments for farms that demonstrate high health and welfare standards

Why Get Involved?

- Free and funded vet input
- Support for disease control and prevention
- Access to grants for practical improvements
- Helps future-proof your farm as support payments change

For more information, visit:
www.ahdb.org.uk/news/farmers-to-access-new-funds-through-the-animal-health-and-welfare-pathway

https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2026/01/22/making-our-funded-vet-visits-work-better-for-pig-farmers/

The science behind flushing

Sir John Harrington invented the flushing toilet for Queen Elizabeth I in 1596, but that has nothing to do with flushing on a pig farm. Flushing sows and gilts is the practice of temporarily increasing feed intake for 4-14d before service to increase ovulation rates. This practice stimulates reproductive hormones to produce more and larger eggs, hopefully resulting in greater number of viable embryos and bigger litters born. Research in the 70s and 80s found that increasing feed post-weaning for 1st parity sows (1.8kg vs 3.6kg) decreased wean-to estrus interval (WEI) and improved farrowing rate, but the same effect was not found in older sows. This led to the general practice of high feed levels post-weaning, that may have brought some positive effect for younger and thinner sows.

Trials with highly prolific sows in the last 20 years have found it hard to replicate these results and have not shown any difference comparing levels of

intake, though they have mostly used higher 'low' feed levels (2.5kg or 1.5 times maintenance level). Also, WEI is generally shorter nowadays so there is less time to influence body condition. Metabolic state in the last weeks of lactation (or altrenogest treatment for gilts) likely has greater effect on subsequent breeding performance than intake in the last 3-5d before service.

It is possible that sows require specific nutrients rather than "simply more feed" in this period. In some studies, insulin withdrawal from diabetic gilts reduced ovulation rate and insulin injections during feed restriction had positive effects on reproductive hormone levels. However, in others, insulin injections did not have a positive effect on reproduction so its benefits are still unknown, and it might be that feeding strategy or addition of sugars acts more though the metabolic status of the animal rather than through insulin or insulin growth factor alone.

Feeding level during the luteal phase in gilts and during lactation in sows affects subsequent follicular development, ovulation rate and embryo survival. But when the size and quality of eggs is influenced by feeding in the WEI, this does not always follow through showing a big difference in born alive or farrowing rate. Therefore, we must consider that flushing start before the last day of altrenogest in gilts or day of weaning in sows and there will be greater effect of interventions for thin sows or small gilts than animals in optimal body condition. Sizing into groups correctly gains huge importance.Feeding very high levels of feed post-weaning will not make up for excessive losses during lactation or inadequate growth in a gilt's development period. As we see with other feeding strategies in gestation in the modern sow (for example, bump feeding), the target is to maintain an optimal body condition at all stages of the cycle because feeding for recovery is costly, time consuming and often ineffective. The content of the feed and how well the feed is digested and utilised is more important than relying on targeted very high feed levels. Offering pigs large volumes of feed in one sitting increases feed wastage: some feed maybe isn't eaten and some feed that is consumed is not utilised because of high intestinal transit.

Reminder for permitted pig farms – nutrient reporting due

If your pig unit operates under an environmental permit, you must complete your nitrogen and phosphorus (N & P) reporting for 2025 by the end of February.

To do this, you'll need to use one of the Environment Agency mass balance calculators, which work out how much nitrogen and phosphorus your pigs have excreted over the year. The calculators have recently been updated to be more practical and user-friendly, following feedback from pig producers. There are also short video guides available to help you fill them in correctly.

What you'll need before you start

Have the following information to hand:

- Number of pigs on the unit
- Diets fed during the year
- Protein and phosphorus levels in the feed
- Total feed used

Once entered, the calculator gives you kg of nitrogen and phosphorus per pig place per year, which is what the Environment Agency requires for your permit return.

Piglet Euthanasia Update

From 1st February 2026, ALL Red Tractor units euthanising piglets MUST use mechanical blunt force trauma i.e. with a gun such as Cash Small Animal Tool.

Other guns are permissible as long as they deliver a minimum of 27.7 Joules (Blitz Schlag and Cash Tool meet this requirement).

All staff using the tool must be trained in its use and we will be updating your training over the next visit cycle.

If you require guns, please contact us ASAP as there is currently a backlog from manufacturers!

TIME TO TAKE CONTROL: Productivity, Profitability & Emissions Reduction. A full day event aimed at pig and poultry producers. Tuesday 12th May 2026, Windmill Village Hotel, Coventry, Birmingham. For more information and to register follow the link below

https://file-us.clickdimensions.com/nutrecocom-afqjk/files/trouwnutritiontimetotakecontrol