

# Pigbytes Newsletter

Issue 11, October 2011



## Biosecurity Important for all piggeries – large and small

Amanda Lee

Do you have a farm biosecurity program in place at your piggery? A good biosecurity program is designed to help you keep your pigs free of diseases that you don't already have, including those currently found in Australia and exotic diseases. It does not need to be complicated to be effective.

Infectious agents can be spread by direct pig-to-pig contact, by feeding swill, by semen, by aerosols, by feral pigs, by rodents, by contamination of transport vehicles, by contamination of clothes and boots on people who then move between farms, by contaminated equipment brought on to farms, and by contaminated feed or water.

Check how good your current biosecurity program is by answering the following questions; the more questions answered 'yes' the more likely you are to have a good biosecurity program in place.

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	Yes	No
Have you discussed biosecurity with a veterinarian?		
Do you purchase pigs from only 1 or 2 sources (and never from a saleyard)?		
Do you have an overnight pig-free period for visitors?		
Do you have a controlled entrance for visitors and provide clean boots and overalls?		
Do you restrict visitor access to pigs and have a visitor's record book?		

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Are domestic pigs separate from feral pigs?

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Do you know the health status of incoming stock?

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If you do artificial insemination on your farm, have you consulted a veterinarian/adviser on disease prevention?

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Are introduced stock kept separate for a period of time and observed for signs of disease?

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Do you regularly clean pens and/or remove manure from paddocks where your pigs are housed?

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Are the vehicles used to transport your pigs cleaned before returning to your farm?

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Do you have a pest control program?

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Do all of the people who work with your pigs have training in emergency animal diseases (EAD)?

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Do all of the people who work with the pigs on your farm know what swill is?

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By following a few simple rules you can significantly reduce the risk of introducing disease to your piggery:

- Have a 'Keep Out' sign at entrance and lock front gates to discourage unauthorised visitors
- Provide secure fencing to separate domestic pigs from feral pigs and goats
- Provide overalls and boots for visitors
- Do not feed swill to your pigs
- Use a single source supply of replacement breeding stock with a similar or better health status than your herd
- Mandatory disinfection of equipment i.e. snares, ultrasound pregnancy detection equipment, which is moved from farm to farm.
- Provide a load out area beyond the farm perimeter
- Don't allow sick staff to work with pigs

Further details about swill feeding regulations, recognising exotic diseases, and farm biosecurity can be found at:

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/pigs/health](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/pigs/health)

## Diagnosis is Critical

*Trish Holyoake*

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Resolution of disease outbreaks in pig herds requires correct diagnosis and treatment. From time to time we do hear of cases where farmers think they are treating for one disease only to find that later investigation reveals the initial diagnosis was incorrect.

This is costly and frustrating for the farmer and any employees. Below are the steps to assist you in getting a correct diagnosis.

### **Step 1: Call a vet.**

Disease diagnosis should be conducted by a veterinarian, preferably one who has pig experience. If your local vet rarely sees pigs, they can refer the case or seek advice from someone with more experience.

Both the Victorian and NSW DPI employ veterinarians with expertise in pigs and these departmental vets can provide support to local, private veterinarians and to producers.

### **Step 2: Get a diagnosis.**

Even experienced pig vets can't diagnose diseases over the phone. It is a legal requirement that a vet see your sick pigs to prescribe and dispense medications.

If you are far away from a vet, you can assist with the diagnosis by sending digital photographs or videos of the affected animals to your vet. They can then advise on collecting and submitting diagnostic specimens to a specialist veterinary laboratory.

Ultimately, the best way to diagnose disease is to conduct a post mortem on freshly-dead or euthanized untreated pigs that are typical of the disease. Disease confirmation often requires the collection of specimens for laboratory submission.

The DPI in Victoria (Pig Health and Research Unit, Bendigo; Telephone 03 54 304444) and NSW (Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute at Menangle, Telephone 02 4640 6333) provide specialist veterinary diagnostic services to the pig industry. Departmental vets can also assist with advice on submitting samples and interpretation of results.

### **Step 3: Monitor the response.**

You need to have some way of measuring response to treatment.

If bacteria are causing the disease and they are sensitive to the antibiotic you are using, expect treated individual pigs to improve within 24 hrs.

This assumes the pigs are receiving the correct dose rate.

To monitor improvements in groups of pigs, calculate the proportion of "tail-ender" pigs, treated pigs and deaths. Ideally, you would measure the pigs' growth, either in a group (to get the average) or individually (to get a feel for variation).

There are some conditions such as Glassers disease and PCV2, where affected individuals will not respond to treatment and euthanasia may be appropriate. Pigs in body condition score <2 that do not respond to treatment should be euthanized.

For these diseases, a prevention strategy such as a vaccination program, improved environment or strategic medication for the next batch of pigs coming through the system can be considered.

Abattoir checks are used by many producers on a regular basis to aid in the monitoring of disease trends within their herds. In Victoria contact Patrick Daniel Ph 0354304570 or in other states discuss options with your vet.

#### **Step 4: Review treatments**

If, whatever treatment you are using does not seem to be having the anticipated improvement, then it is time to review the situation.

Contact your veterinarian for advice on this and ask about the expected time for clinical improvement after a treatment plan is implemented.

In some cases where a new disease is introduced into your herd, you may never get back to pre-outbreak levels - you just try and minimize the damage. (Some pathogens such as mange, swine dysentery, and *Mycoplasma pneumonia* can be eradicated if they are significantly impacting your herd's performance. You would need to discuss a program for their eradication with your vet and make sure all animals were treated accordingly.)

Measuring growth rates of batches of pigs and their feed to gain ratio can be useful tools to measure response to treatment.

Use of these measurement tools allows you to determine the treatment "break-even" costs.

For example, if a treatment provides you a growth rate improvement of 10 g/day, or 1% improvement in weaner/grower mortality, you can afford to spend between \$1.50- \$3.00 per pig (depending on feed costs and pig prices).

It is pointless spending more money on fixing a problem than the actual problem is costing.

Remember the words of Albert Einstein "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".

#### **Laboratory information:**

Pig Health and Research Unit (PHRU) Victorian DPI Bendigo:  
<http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/animals-and-livestock/pigs/pig-health-and-welfare/pig-health-and-research-unit>

Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) NSW DPI Menangle:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/vetmanual/contact>

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/research/centres/ema>

## **Questions from the field**

Amanda Lee

### ***Can you use injectable parasite treatments and vaccinate your pigs for Erysipelas at the same time?***

There is no issue with giving an Erysipelas vaccine at the same time as an injectable parasite treatment, but make sure injections are given on opposite sides of the neck.

Obviously, you can't give antibiotics at the same time as live vaccines like Enterisol Ileitis® and probiotics.

Never mix different pharmaceutical company vaccines/medications in the same syringe.

### ***If you miss an Ecoli vaccination in your sows during pregnancy, is there a way to make it right?***

Breeding females should be vaccinated twice before farrowing to prevent *E. coli* diarrhoea in their piglets. The second shot should be given 2-3 weeks before farrowing to allow protective antibodies to be passed to piglets in the sow's colostrum. They should be re-vaccinated with each successive litter. Gilt litters are the most susceptible so ensure they are vaccinated.

If sow vaccinations for *E. coli* have been missed or if *E. coli* is a problem post-weaning then farmers can vaccinate the progeny.

Vaccines should be given orally about 1 week before weaning to have the best results. These oral vaccines are not available "off-the-shelf". Talk with your veterinarian if you have problems with *E. coli* diarrhoea post-weaning.

Ensure good hygiene, good colostrum intake by piglets, good sow nutrition, correct creep temperature (30-32°C), and no draughts to reduce incidence/severity of scours.



There is a useful Primefact on the NSW DPI website on Vaccination programs with information on *E. Coli* vaccination:  
<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/pigs/health/vaccination-program>

## Turn workplace skills into a Recognized Qualification

*Keran Dillon-Richards – Tocal College*

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The pig welfare code and the legislation supporting this code require that pigs be cared for by competent stock persons.

If you have been in the industry for a few years and have received on-the-job training and have the skills and experience necessary, you could turn your skills into a qualification by undertaking the Skills Recognition program.

Tocal College is the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for NSW DPI. Ken Ryall and Keran Dillon-Richards have been assessing groups of pig farmers under the Skills Recognition process in NSW over the last 12 months.



*Figure 1: A Graduation ceremony was held at Young on 30<sup>th</sup> August for the first group of graduates under the Skills Recognition program.*

*Pictured above from L to R:*

*Back Row – David Edwards, Roger Sayle, Jason Hyam, Jamie Anderson*

*Front Row – Andrew Butt, Allan Elphick, Keith Harrop, Katrina Hodgkinson (Minister for Primary Industries NSW), Cameron Archer (Principal Tocal College), Richard Donges, Donna Fraser, and Ross Ord (Manager Workforce Development AgriFood Skills Australia).*

The qualifications of Certificate IV and Diploma in Pig Production can be achieved under the Skills Recognition process. Government funding may apply to reduce costs but is not guaranteed.

Many candidates are eligible for their qualification with no further training necessary, while for some the process identifies areas requiring further training. Often the extra training required is only a part of a unit of competency and is easily completed by on the job activities.

If you would like more information about the Skills Recognition process or want to register for a qualification by Skills Recognition, please call Keran Dillon-Richards on phone 02 4939 8867.

## NSW Stock Person Skillset Training

*Jayce Morgan*

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In 2010 NSW DPI collaborated with Sydney University to utilize the university piggery and provide a pilot stock person skillset training course for pig farmers.

The pilot proved a success with 15 persons completing the course. If you or your staff would be interested in attending a 2 day training course at a practicing piggery please contact me on 02 6763 1257.

We need 10 persons minimum to run the course and trainees would need to fund their own accommodation in Camden for the duration of the course. Other costs would be dependent on numbers and availability of funding.

## Victoria Stock Person Training

*Trish Holyoake*

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New welfare legislation is being introduced in Victoria (*Livestock Management Act – LMA*) and this will specify the Standards and Guidelines for pig welfare in Victoria. The scheduled release for the welfare standards within the LMA is November 2011.

The draft standards include that owner/operators who are new to the pig industry and /or those who have little recent documented experience or training **must** seek to acquire a Certificate III in Agriculture (Pig Production).

New inexperienced staff on piggeries must work under the direct supervision of a person with Certificate III in Agriculture and undergo training for 12 months before they can work unsupervised.

The Pig Health and Research Unit (PHRU) based in Bendigo provide training and assessment of stock persons in Certificate III in Agriculture (Pig Production).

Training is conducted by veterinarians with expertise and experience in pig health, welfare, production, quality assurance and reproduction. Trainees participate in classroom sessions where they are provided with underpinning knowledge of each unit of competency.

Practical training is undertaken on farm. Units of competency are assessed on farm by PHRU assessors.

Enrolment is through Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GoTAFE) [www.gotafe.vic.edu.au](http://www.gotafe.vic.edu.au)

For enrolment information contact Mr Leigh Kildey (Commercial Manager) Ph:03 5723 6293, Mob: 0457 543 622 or email [lkildey@gotafe.vic.edu.au](mailto:lkildey@gotafe.vic.edu.au)

Producers may be eligible for financial assistance through the Australian Apprenticeships Centre. For more information please contact Peter Trehwella, Area Manager MEGT Australian Apprenticeships Centre on Ph 03 5442 8862, Mob 0409 110 359.

For more details and course content and delivery of Certificate III in Agriculture (Pig Production) contact Trish Holyoake or Tony Fahy at the Pig Health and Research Unit.



Figure 2: Viewing the breeding stock at Brian and Kim Smith's farm Greta Valley Free Range Pork.

## Outdoor pig farming

Trish Holyoake

There is increasing interest in the management and marketing of pigs reared outdoors. Recently an open day was held at the property of Brian and Kim Smith (Greta Valley Free Range Pork).

The Smiths rear approximately 30 Berkshire sows and their progeny outdoors. The farm is accredited with **APIQ**® (Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance scheme) as Free Range.

Approximately 35 people attended the day to learn from Greg Stuart (Victorian DPI) about the "8 must-dos" for pig owners, and from Dr Trish Holyoake (Pig Health and Research Unit) on the health, welfare, productivity, and environmental aspects of rearing pigs outdoors.

Kim and Brian provided excellent practical advice on topics ranging from marketing to piglet castration. The talks and a walking tour of the farm was followed by a BBQ lunch featuring pork sausages in a multitude of flavours.

There was some interest in forming a networking group of like-minded producers who rear pigs outdoors, with the potential to arrange future training and/or open days.

If you are interested in becoming part of this network, contact Trish Holyoake at the Pig Health and Research Unit.

## Organic Pork opportunity

Jayce Morgan

In the September issue of the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA) e-newsletter "Organic Market News" there is mention of an opportunity to supply certified organic pork to overseas markets.

"If producers are interested in adding pig production to a currently certified operation or converting existing pig operations to organic, please contact Simone Tully, mob 0408 451 078."

## Coming Events

- A **Sow Group Housing Seminar** will be held in Forbes on the 13<sup>th</sup> October at the Rugby Union Clubhouse on Grinstead Oval from 9 am to 5 pm.

Speakers are practical farmers who are willing to share their experiences and their talks begin at 10.30 am.

Product displays will be provided by Vacluse-APS, Stockyard Industries, Ben Slots, Mundinggo and Veryken Bros.

Please RSVP if you are coming as morning and afternoon teas and lunch are being provided and the day is free. Call Jayce Morgan 0428 416 518 or email [jayce.morgan@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jayce.morgan@industry.nsw.gov.au)

- **Future Focused – Young Australians Building Trust & Confidence in Agriculture** 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011 starting 12 noon on the Saturday and finishing Sunday at 1pm.

This event is designed to bring together young agriculturalists to share ideas to build trust and confidence in agriculture and our food system.

One of the keynote speakers is Charlie Arnot, who is CEO of the US Centre for Food Integrity and President of CMA consulting. Charlie is internationally recognized as a thought leader on food and agriculture issues and a thought provoking writer and speaker.

Other speakers include Lynne Strong and Crystal Young. Lynne was runner up in the 2011 Rabobank Farm Industry Leader of the Year Award. Lynne is passionate about sustainable agriculture and recognizes a pressing need for primary producers to reconnect with consumers.

Crystal hails from Canada and will be presenting live via webinar. Crystal believes that *'for too long we've let others tell our story, and they haven't told it very truthfully'*. Crystal uses her blog, Twitter and Facebook to tell agriculture's story, encourage consumers to ask where their food comes from and give ranchers and farmers a tool kit to be advocates for agriculture.

This sounds like an amazing event. More information regarding the program and registration form may be found at <http://apen.me/ffagoz>

Or contact Greg Mills mob 0488 491 648 email [greg.mills@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:greg.mills@industry.nsw.gov.au)

- **Survivability seminar** Bendigo 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March 2012 – venue to be confirmed.

Pig survivability has recently been identified as the number one profit driver for producers. The Pig Health and Research Unit is proud to announce the upcoming seminar for pig producers and their advisors "Survivability – the key to success" focusing on maximizing survivability of pigs.

Speakers of international standing, both local (Drs Trish Holyoake and Tony Fahy) and overseas (Professor John Deen and Dr John Carr) will provide the latest strategies to control mortalities in pre- and post-weaning pigs and sows.

Further information will be provided closer to the date. Contact Trish Holyoake mob 0419 231 534 or email [trish.holyoake@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:trish.holyoake@dpi.vic.gov.au)

## NSW DPI Pig Industry Group

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Greg Mills  
Industry Development..... 02 6750 6312

Ian Kruger  
Environmental Engineer ..... 02 6763 1272

Dr Amanda Lee

Pig Health Coordinator..... 02 4640 6308

Tim Burfitt

Manager Intensive Livestock Industries  
Development ..... 02 6391 3729

## Victorian DPI Pig Industry Group

Dr Trish Holyoake

Senior Veterinary Officer - Pigs..... 03 54304412

Dr Tony Fahy

Manager Pig Health & Research Unit 03 54304595

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..... 03 54304570

*Pigbytes* is a newsletter from the pig industry team at NSW and Victorian DPI.

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