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DICTIONARY



Month end date	EU Spec GB SPP (p/kg)	Change on month (p)	Average Pig Weight (Kg)	UK weekly clean kill-000head	LIFFE wheat futures (£/tonne)	Soyameal 46% Braz. (£/tonne) ex store L'pool
October	144.84	+4.93	82.16			



SRUC Pig Information Group recently held a Research Roadshow at Lochter near Inverurie. The meeting current pig research and also engage with both farmers and representatives from the wider industry to seek future areas for research. The main speakers were Veterinary Epidemiologist Dr Carla Gomes and Researcher Dr Emma Baxter.

Carla Gomes presented an overview of several ongoing projects run by the **Epidemiology Research Unit (ERU)** in Inverness. These projects focus on the monitoring of endemic diseases, such as the industry-based endemic disease surveillance schemes operating in many abattoirs across UK. The benefits of continuous standardised monitoring of lesions in terms of monitoring disease prevalence and the early detection of changes were highlighted to the audience. **(see Focus Topic in the November 2016 edition of the PIG e-newsletter for more details)**

The ERU is also part of the **Scottish Government Centre of Expertise in Animal Disease Outbreaks (EPIC)**. While EPIC focuses mainly on exotic diseases, work in the pig sector has explored the use of animal movements for disease spread and modelling both classical and African swine fevers spread in Great



Why is aggression so important?

When unfamiliar pigs are grouped together they fight to establish dominance relationships. This natural behaviour can, under farm conditions, escalate to the extent where both health and productivity are affected.

What are the signs of extreme aggression?

Newly mixed pigs will show some skin lesions (image 1).

Every lesion is the result of a bite. **Patches of lesions can signify around 50-100 bites.** This goes together with high levels of exhaustion.

Aggression should subside around 24h after regrouping. Lameness and death at regrouping indicate very extreme aggression.

In stable groups aggression should be minimal. Recently, cases of deaths due to aggression in stable groups seem to be increasing. If you encounter repeated issues with this then please contact **SRUC (contact details at end)**, as we are investigating the causes of this.

Effects on production

Aggression has many effects including:



7 tips to help reduce aggression in your herd

Tip 1. Avoid regrouping when possible. If needed, then regroup pigs as young as possible. The older and heavier pigs are, the more likely that growth will be reduced and injuries occur.

Tip 2. Try to keep the number of unfamiliar pigs per pen as low as possible. The higher the familiarity- the fewer the fights. **Caution: Do not put one or two unfamiliar pigs in an established group.**

Careful selection of sows

Aggressiveness is heritable. Careful selection of the sows can thus reduce aggression in the population.

Tip 3. Score gilts on aggressiveness (e.g. 0 not aggressive – 5 aggressive) and take this score into consideration when selecting replacements.

Co-mingling litters pre-weaning

Co-mingling, or socialization, involves putting two or more litters together before weaning. This increases pigs' abilities to resolve dominance relationships quickly with limited long-term aggression.



Image 2. The younger pigs are mixed the better.

Tip 4. Let litters co-mingle from either two weeks of age or a few days before weaning by removing barriers between crates. This will reduce aggression and stress at weaning.

Pen conditions

When space is limited, pigs cannot properly retreat.

Tip 5. Providing plenty of space at mixing allows pigs to signal their intent and thereby establish their hierarchy quickly.

Tip 6. Provide an obstacle behind which a pig can hide its head (e.g. straw bale) as this can substantially reduce injuries.

Tip 7. Enrichment material occupies pigs and keeps them from continued fighting. **Caution: items can also be a resource to fight over- increasing aggression.**



Image 3. Provision of an enrichment material- straw in this case.

What does it really cost?

Aggression is known to reduce profit, but the actual costs of aggression are unknown. In a recently started project we calculate the costs and benefits of strategies to reduce aggression, based on farmers' perspective on aggression and opinion on different strategies. This does however require farm information. We would highly appreciate your participation in this study. You can join in the initial 10 min survey via

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/pigaggression>

Please get in contact if you would like to receive the survey by post or if you are interested in joining in the upcoming stakeholder meetings.

For more information on any of the above, please contact Irene.camerlink@sruc.ac.uk

Irene Camerlink



In 2011, with mortality figures ever rising Oatridge Farm began an investigation into carrying out a de-population or a re-population (de-pop/re-pop) on their 130 sow, farrow to finish unit.

The piggery was experiencing difficulty in controlling:

Enzootic Pneumonia (EP)
Porcine Reproductive Respiratory
Syndrome (PRRS)
Pleurisy
Post-Weaning Multisystemic Wasting
Syndrome (PMWS).

Disease pressure was believed to be contributing to a pre-weaning mortality of **up to 21%** (vs UK av. 12.35%, AHDB Pork), and post weaning mortality of **2.1%** (vs. UK av. 0.9%, AHDB Pork).

On weighing up the options of both partial or full de-pops, it was decided to plan for a full de-pop, as a partial de-pop would not eliminate disease prevalence



What exactly are mycotoxins?

Mycotoxins are toxic substances that are produced through growth of certain fungal species on grains and other materials in the environment and have the potential to adversely affect animal and human health if eaten in sufficient quantity.

In the UK, contamination by the fungi *Fusarium* species is common, especially in moist, cool conditions. These species produce:

Zearalenone (commonly referred to as ZON or ZEA)

Deoxynivalenol (commonly referred to as DON)

Fusarium species need high relative humidity (more than 70%) or grain moisture of more than 22% for growth. The fungi can contaminate growing crops (mainly wheat and barley- with the risk highest when there is high rainfall at flowering (GS59) or pre-harvest) or stored grain that has a high moisture content. They can also contaminate finished feed that is stored in unsuitable conditions or when left to go stale in feeders in warm, humid buildings.

Other fungi can contaminate grains and feed under such conditions with the *Aspergillus* species and *Penicillium* species also producing toxins but there are many other species that grow as moulds but don't produce toxins.

Farmers should never take the risk of feeding mouldy feeds.

Part of the problem is that contamination with mycotoxins is **not** always obvious and **it can be a**

systems unbeknown to farmers.

DIC DON



All the above happen because DON is a vomitoxin and it affects the palatability of feed. Some pigs are more affected by it than others. Within groups some pigs retain a near-

