



Happy New Year to you all!

We hope you have all managed to enjoy some relaxation and merriment over the festive season, despite the hard times endured during 2022. The UK Pig Industry is still suffering unprecedented hardship but we do hear of some positive predictions and sincerely wish you the very best for 2023.

Finisher Scour

Looseness in finisher pigs is a relatively common problem across the industry but as such can often be one that is overlooked. Mortality in many cases can be low but the impact on the cost of production can be significant, particularly in the current climate of exceptionally high feed costs. As such proactive investigation of issues that on the face of it appear relatively mild may well be warranted.

One scour causing pathogen that all producers should be aware of is *Brachyspira hyodysenteriae*, the cause of swine dysentery. Many will be aware of the severity of disease that this organism has the potential to cause including diarrhoea containing both blood and mucous. As such, where disease is confirmed, Red Tractor members must report this to the industry under the Significant Diseases Charter. A variety of control mechanisms are available, including both antibiotic and non-antibiotic options, as well as eradication programmes where required. *Brachyspira pilosicoli* is a related organism that typically causes less severe disease and as such is not reportable, but is often treated in a similar way.

Another organism of significance is *Lawsonia Intracellularis*, which causes a disease known as Ileitis, typically in pigs from 20kg upwards. As well as antibiotic treatment, there are also vaccinations, that can be administered both orally and via injection for this disease should the severity of the problem warrant this investment.

The final major pathogen to consider in cases of finisher scour is Salmonella, with various strains occurring in pigs. This is not only a common pathogen in finisher pigs, but also in the nursery and is the most common organism identified in cases of enteric disease in pigs post-weaning by the APHA. It is also important to remember that this disease can also affect humans and a good standard of hygiene is therefore required. Treatment options again include both antibiotics and vaccinations.

Although patterns can be seen in the age of pig affected, severity of disease and the appearance of the scour, it can be difficult to reliably distinguish between each of these diseases without post-mortems, sampling and laboratory investigation. Once a diagnosis has been reached, there are lots of treatment and control options out there but close monitoring of feed conversion/ usage and growth rates is important as often this is where the major effect of any intervention will be apparent and, crucially, where the economic payback will be.

Do remember also that not all causes of scour are infectious and other factors, particularly the diet being fed to the pigs and any recent changes, should also be taken into account.

So, the next time you notice some looseness in your finisher accommodation, don't underestimate the impact it might be having on your business and get in touch with your vet to discuss the options available!

Slurry Infrastructure Grants

For anyone not aware there are government grants available to improve or expand slurry storage. See [link here Slurry Infrastructure grant: guidance now available - Future Farming \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

Applications have to be in by 31st Jan

The long view from history – an occasional series!

Further to our last article, the transactions of Bath and West Agricultural Society go even further back in time to 1786 and a depressingly similar spreadsheet – lack of profitability in the industry is nothing new! The author added “I have omitted my charge for attending these hogs, as I deem the manure they have made equal in value to expense”.

Where farms could make more of a return was where there was access to dairy or butter waste by-products, but these were only available in dairy areas.

As late as 1850s pig feeding was very seasonal. Although the old system of “pannage” (driving into woods for Acorn and Beech) was much less practiced, grazing was widely used in late spring and summer. Fattening tended to be carried out in autumn when more feed was available – pigs born outside this window would be “stored” (hence stores) on maintenance ration until feed was available for fattening.

Cost	£	s	d	Revenue	£	s	d
5 porkers March 17 th 1785	3	12	6	April 21 st 2 pigs			
Expenses at driving from market	0	1	3	=107 lb			
6 bushels of barley	0	16	6	April 28 th 3 pigs			
Tailings and grinding				= 206 lb			
Coal	0	1	5	313 lb @6/4d a score			
4 bushels potatoes		7	6				
Total Cost	4	19	6	Total Revenue	4	19	6

Staff Update

Well done to our team who, with typical generosity, organised a **whopping**, huge donation to our local food bank for those in need this Christmas.

It was very gratefully received and included a wide variety of items including gifts for the little ones. Again, very well done all; some will have enjoyed a better Christmas because of you!

