



The  
**GEORGE**  
Pig Practice

**George Veterinary Group**

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### WINTER WORRIES

We are now well into our first winter with significant reductions in antibiotic use across the industry, and on the whole our clients are coping very well with the changes. However, with any changes in management practices come a few inevitable stumbling blocks...

With the up and down temperatures and sharp cold spells we've been having, the vets in The George Pig Team are seeing a variety of ailments rearing their heads - **Glässers disease**, **Salmonella** and **Strep suis** are being seen more commonly at the moment.

In the first instance, if you are seeing more deaths than usual, or clinical signs of disease, don't hesitate to give us a call and discuss with a vet the best way to proceed – it may be appropriate to arrange a visit to check the pigs and perform post mortem examinations, or to guide you over the phone to manage the situation.

#### Prevention of disease through management:

##### **FEED**

1. Ensure there is always food available for growing pigs, and that there is enough trough space.
2. Gruel feeding smalls and sick pigs is a great tool in aiding increased feed intakes – mash up bagged creep feed with warm water twice a day to produce a porridge consistency and feed in troughs. If you're a breeding unit with Farrowmate or equivalent readily available, this makes a tasty alternative for mixing!

##### **WATER**

1. Watch out for frozen pipes – insulate any exposed pipes, and use a blow torch on metal pipework that can't be insulated to defrost each morning.
2. While it's all warming up, provide an alternative source of water (buckets, troughs, etc.) – pigs need water available at all times in order to remain healthy.
3. Check for any leaks, even drips. They waste water, fill your slurry tanks and make pens wet and cold.
4. As throughout the year, maintain clean water lines, troughs and drinkers to limit pathogen exposure.

##### **WARMTH**

1. Ensure pens are dry and provide plenty of clean straw for pigs to nest in.
2. Insulate kennels for nursery pigs using bales of straw, topper sheets or whatever you have available.
3. Check for draughts and exclude any you find, whilst maintaining appropriate ventilation (take a minute to stand in kennels where piglets normally lie).
4. It's worth investigating heaters (strips or lamps) for kennels if your buildings are cold.
5. Put max-min thermometers in pens to monitor temperature drops.

##### **SIZING**

To manage any issues with the greatest efficiency, it's a good idea to size your pigs on arrival post-weaning, and re-evaluate as necessary after finishing creep feed. At any time, pull out pigs going backwards to be cared for in hospital accommodation.

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## **HOSPITAL PENS**

Utilise hospital pens for any very sick animals undergoing treatment, and make sure these are especially warm, dry and comfortable, with a good supply of fresh feed and water. This will not only allow you to provide TLC, but will also limit spread of disease round their pen mates. Gruel feeding is ideal for young hospital pigs.

## **STRESS**

Any increased stress on pigs can predispose to illness – handle sick pigs with care and aim not to move and mix pigs too much (aside from necessary sizing once or twice in a batch).

## **BIOSECURITY**

As you normally would, maintain strict hygiene when dealing with sick pigs, and move from youngest to oldest when doing the rounds.

These elements of husbandry not only contribute to the health and growth of your pigs, but failure to keep the environment stable in unstable weather conditions can lead very quickly to vice, particularly tail biting.

### **First line injectable treatment:**

Again, with a reduction in mass medication – particularly in feed – emphasis on individual pig care is becoming ever more important.

**Meningitis:** Penicillin (Ultrapen, Norocillin, Betamox/Vetrimoxin)

**Coughing:** Engemycin 10%

**Diarrhoea:** Selectan (diarrhoea coupled with raised mortality, or any sign of blood is cause for a call to the vets!)

- *Refer to your own Veterinary Health Plans for details on medicines and alternatives.*

With any symptoms of disease, if you are seeing more than the odd one and are unable to control it with individual injectables, you may require investigation and possibly some in-water medication to get on top of it.

*To summarise, phone us if you are at all concerned about a rise in illness or mortality in your pigs, and ensure your management practices are allowing for colder temperatures at this time.*

## **BOVINE TB AND PIGS**

A reminder to those pig producers who also own cattle – bovine tuberculosis is an issue for both species.

We would advise all our clients in this situation, to apply for (if you haven't already) a separate County Parish Holding number for each species. The reason for this is that any of you that market to abattoirs sending meat to China or India for example, will not be able to send pigs from a TB restricted holding.

Please do inform us immediately if you have a bTB reactor or inconclusive test in your cattle and do not have a separate holding number for your pigs, as there are certification implications for both you and us.

**Alice Brough BVM&S MRCVS**