



The
GEORGE
Pig Practice

George Veterinary Group

High Street

Malmesbury

Wiltshire

SN16 9AU

01666 823355

E.mail – pigteam@georgevetgroup.co.uk

Thanks to all of you that attended this year's GVG Pig Fairs at Exeter and Wincanton racecourses. We were all grateful for the positive feedback and as usual the Q & A session came up with some interesting and somewhat challenging questions.

WEANED PIG MANAGEMENT

Maarten van Horen, a vet working for ForFarmers in Belgium, shared with us his experiences relating to weaned pig management, particularly against the background of antibiotic and zinc reduction. The situation is slightly different in Belgium compared to the UK as a large proportion of units operate on a 4-week batch system, with 3 week weaning. This alone prompted some interesting questions concerning legality of early weaning under EU legislation! The challenge for Belgian farmers in terms of managing weaner health and performance was clear: weaning of a 5.1kg pig at an average 21 days. Maarten very clearly set expectations early on by stating that achieving equivalent performance without zinc and with lower antibiotic use was indeed challenging but, we had no choice. Do not expect to achieve good results by looking for the "silver bullet" such as a single ration change, but a fundamental upgrade of the key elements could be successful:

1. WATER AND FEED INTAKE EARLY POST WEANING ARE VITAL

the importance of a really strong creep feeding programme, possibly starting with a really high quality pre-starter from as early as D4, before transitioning to the weaner ration pre-weaning was stressed.

Higher intakes can be achieved by offering creep as a "porridge" but hygiene and freshness are key points.

2. "LOWER SPEC" WEANER RATIONS can, in some situations, be more "gut friendly" and produce better results.

3. WATER ACIDIFICATION can help with water hygiene, gut health and intakes.

4. SCRUPULOUS HYGIENE of the weaner accommodation is always important.

5. AUTOGENOUS VACCINATION against pathogens such as *Strep suis* (common cause of meningitis) is apparently now common in Belgium, as it is here, and really helping to reduce reliance on antibiotics.

T

A

L

K

S

H

O

P

ASF UPDATE

The heightened level of risk from African Swine Fever was emphasised bearing in mind recent spread into Belgium. This most likely represents a leap of well over a 1000km from Eastern Europe – a journey not likely to have been achieved on the 4 trotters of a wild boar! This therefore means that human activity (stupidity, negligence or malice) has caused this new outbreak. The history of ASF spread through Eastern Europe highlights the danger associated with the current Belgian outbreak – index cases in wild boar with further spread and more numerous cases, followed by spread into smallholder, and then commercial pigs.

ASF virus is highly durable and survive for months in infected carcasses and smoked and cured hams, salami, sausages etc. It can potentially survive for weeks on equipment, clothing, footwear contaminated with body fluids, faeces etc.

Strictly no pork/pork products allowed onto farm.

If any of your staff or contractors are visiting, or have contact with infected areas, please highlight the risks – more information can be obtained from AHDB, NPA or George Vet Group.

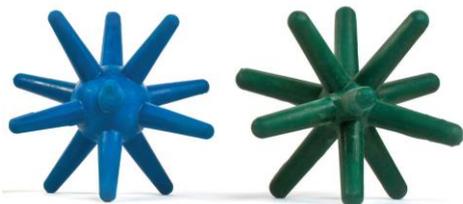
“TAILS OF WOE”

Annie and Fran gave an update on the hot topics of tail damage, tail docking and manipulable material. The background to these discussions are on-going challenges of tail damage in pigs with regulatory authorities seeking to reduce tail docking as part of a Pan EU initiative. The (mis!)conception that straw is the answer to all these problems was highlighted by Fran – if only it were that simple! We expect new Codes of Recommendation for the Welfare of Pigs to be implemented in January 2019 and, although the exact wording in several key areas is yet to be finalised, they will almost certainly have significant ramifications for how we run our farms. Significant points from these presentations included:-

TAIL DOCKING cannot be carried out as a routine and only after all other practical and reasonable measures to control the vice of tail biting have been implemented. It must be supported by a veterinary derogation which must be reviewed at least quarterly.

JUSTIFICATION for tail docking is, and will be, a key element for both the veterinary derogation and to ensure legality for the farmer. In short, this means accurate and complete records of vice incidents on the farm – henceforth, no records, no justification, no legal basis for suggesting tail docking is necessary!

CESSATION OF TAIL DOCKING without first attending to other key risk factors for tail biting and, having a plan in place in case things go wrong, is definitely NOT advised.



GVG is able to supply the Easyfix and Piglyx range of enrichment – please let us know if you are interested.

A more sensible approach on many farms may be to trial small, defined groups of undocked pigs through the unit at different times of the year.

An update on investigations into parasite challenges in breeding herds across our client base was also given but, that excitement will have to wait for future Talkshops.

Thanks to all of you who attended, we hope you got something out of it.