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### **RECORDING REMINDER**

It is now more important than ever to keep accurate records of tail biting and vice outbreaks on farm. Tail biting is a problem a lot of us face, and it's an area that is still not fully understood – in order to make inroads into alleviating this somewhat soul-destroying issue, we really need to understand the risk factors involved on an individual farm basis, as well as any interventions that can provide relief or, equally important, don't. Recording not only allows us to analyse where interventions have been effective or not, but it is also a requirement for those of you tail docking or receiving tail docked pigs to continue the practice should this be identified as a necessary intervention.

We will be setting our intern, Claire, to the task of looking at vice and environmental enrichment as an ongoing project when she joins us in December, therefore it is imperative that on-farm records are kept up to scratch! I hope that all of you have a few copies of the GVG vice recording forms, but if not please just let us know and we will happily post or email them to you.

### **KEEP YOUR WEANERS WARM!**

An inordinate number of calls come in at this time of year for us to investigate increased mortality or post-weaning diarrhoea. In my experience, the cause often becomes apparent when one sneaks into a shed quietly to observe pigs in their natural state – piglets piled high in a corner or buried in mounds of straw in an attempt to keep warm, coupled with a thicker hair coat than normal or loss of condition, indicate that the cold is causing them enough stress to become ill.

The mistake is easily made, because typically when we're checking pigs during the day the temperature can be quite pleasant and pigs will be up and about to investigate you and to take some food and water, but overnight temperatures are now dropping below freezing and this fluctuation and chilling is what opens pigs up to diseases like Salmonella, E. Coli and meningitis. That said, it is also easily remedied. A little preparation before weaning day may just save you a lot of money on medication, poor weight gain and loss of life.

RSPCA Standards stipulate a creep/kennel area at 26-30°C for the first week for freshly weaned piglets, which even with appropriate kennelling can be difficult to achieve in this country. So I urge you to take a look at your own set up – spend a moment in the accommodation at piglet level:

- Feel for draughts
- Provide insulation around kennels and within it
- Ensure bedding is dry and plentiful
- Make sure there is enough space for all pigs to fit inside comfortably
- Get creative with old feed bags or Terram to trap heat
- Consider max-min thermometers to monitor fluctuations...

...If you're cold in a jacket and hat, chances are your weaners will be too!

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## “MORE WORMY TALES”

To follow on from last month’s review of our Pig Fair hot topics, I would like to finish this off by summarising our work over the last year on internal parasites in the pig sector. For those of you that missed it, Richard gave an excellent talk on worms and the two studies we’ve undertaken within the practice involving a number of our clients’ herds. Richard discussed the first study in April’s TalkShop (available on our website), so here I will only mention the second and its findings. Echoing last year’s Pig Fair, we set out to question current thoughts and practices surrounding worms in pigs. The general consensus before we began looking into this was that worms were generally quite well controlled in the pig sector...

### Survey and Testing

- Faecal samples were collected from different areas on farm (farrowing, dry sows, in-pig gilts and maiden gilts).
- Worm egg counts performed on these gave us an idea of the worm burden on the farm and the different types of worm present.
- A survey at the time of visit detailed worming history and farming system.

### Results Summary

- The number of farms with positive counts for any worm type was much higher than we expected, at a whopping 85%.
- Some extremely high burdens were found (up to 15000eggs per gramme of faeces), even on farms using a worming product.
- Indoor herds comparatively had much higher burdens than outdoor (contrary to popular belief!)
- Farms treated with Benzimidazoles (flubendazole/fenbendazole) tended to have lower counts than those treated with Ivermectin, and farms using neither had the highest counts.
- We found the highest counts in farrowing sows, followed by dry sows, with gilts having much lower counts on the whole.

...So this has given us a number of considerations for the way that we manage our farms, in terms of taking a more holistic approach to parasite control. Helminths are certainly more prevalent than we thought, and can have some fairly significant effects on a farm’s productivity, both in the breeding and the rearing herd.

Wormer resistance is something that we do need to consider, and I think that we can look to learn from the cattle and sheep sectors to find ways in which to preserve the efficacy of our products by using them responsibly.

Faecal sampling is a non-invasive and fairly low cost monitoring tool for most helminths, and can be used pre- and post-treatment to indicate efficacy of a product.

Each farm has its own challenges and its own cohort of parasites which may or may not behave the same as those on a different farm; it’s a case of working with your vet to design the most appropriate protocol and system of management for your own pigs.

**Alice Brough BVM& S MRCVS**

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