



Target

Farm

Action

A monthly digest of practical advice for pig farmers from BPEX

Pigs in the palm of your hand

More and more producers are benefiting from access to full sow histories in the palm of their hand as they go through their daily routine.

A pocket PC is very flexible – it can be used simply as a sow history checker, which is particularly useful for outdoor producers, or a complete data input tool where it can replace the printing of both sow cards and action lists. And you do not have to be a computer expert to use one.

Sow cards are transferred automatically from the user's recording software on the office computer. All data entry can then be carried out through the working day before it is downloaded back to the office software.

BQP Gilt Mating Unit manager Steve Milnes is very enthusiastic about hand-held data recording, having used a pocket PC for around six months and says:

"It cuts out paperwork and is very quick and easy to enter data. I update data throughout the day and recording has now become part of my routine. It helps make the data recorded

more accurate and all the data is backed up daily on the main computer.

All data is validated on entry, meaning an end to the usual problem of data queries going back and forward between farm and office.

There is also the option to view action lists which display sows that are due for various events and then the correct data can be entered, which further aids the data validation process.

"I particularly enjoy being able to walk through the yards with full access to all the animal cards so I can check each individual – I can pull up the information right beside the sow.

"I'm also building up a profile of each of our gilts, as I just enter comments about an animal as soon as I spot something."

Steve was sceptical about using a pocket PC at first but would now never go back to paper recording. All the information he needs is in the palm of his hand and it has now made recording a pleasure, rather than a chore.



Toys for SOWS

On a recent study tour to Holland, the Devon and Cornwall Training Club saw toys being used as permanent fixtures on farrowing crates.

Toys included split piping that was clipped over the bars nearest the sows head and chains and balls hanging where the sow could reach them. It was notable to the whole group that they were being used by the sows at all stages of lactation.

This is a 'cheap and cheerful' but effective way of providing enrichment to a sow in the farrowing house. BPEX Knowledge Transfer Manager Helen Thoday said: "There are known benefits to hormonal feedback when providing enrichment just prior to farrowing, but this is the first time we had seen toys being used for sows to play with all the way through lactation."

Split piping clipped over the bar near to the sow's head provides a form of entertainment



10 things you need to know about your Veterinary Health Plan

As part of farm assurance every pig producer must retain the services of a qualified veterinary surgeon.

One of the roles of the unit vet is to write a Veterinary Health Plan (VHP).

The VHP should be made full use of and be part of the unit management strategy: improving production through improved health.

Lack of use, updates and whereabouts of the VHP is a common area of non-compliance on assurance inspections.

1. The VHP is different from the Quarterly Veterinary Visit Report (QVVR). The VHP is the ongoing Health Plan that your unit is working to, to understand, monitor and improve health
2. You must implement what is in the VHP to gain full advantage of the vet care and improvements in health
3. It needs to be available for inspection at all times
4. More people than just the owner or

manager should know where it is kept

5. All members of staff working with pigs should be aware of what is in the VHP and what changes have been made to it
6. As a minimum it must be reviewed annually by the vet
7. The VHP must list all personnel deemed competent by the farm's attending veterinary surgeon to perform injections and only these staff should be injecting pigs
8. The quarantine procedure for replacement animals brought in from other sources must be reviewed in the VHP
9. The VHP must be updated in the light of current Codes of Practice i.e. the cleansing and disinfection policy must have been reviewed in the light of the DEFRA Salmonella in Pigs booklet
10. Ten specific herd performance indicators must be monitored for signs of disease or production disorders.

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