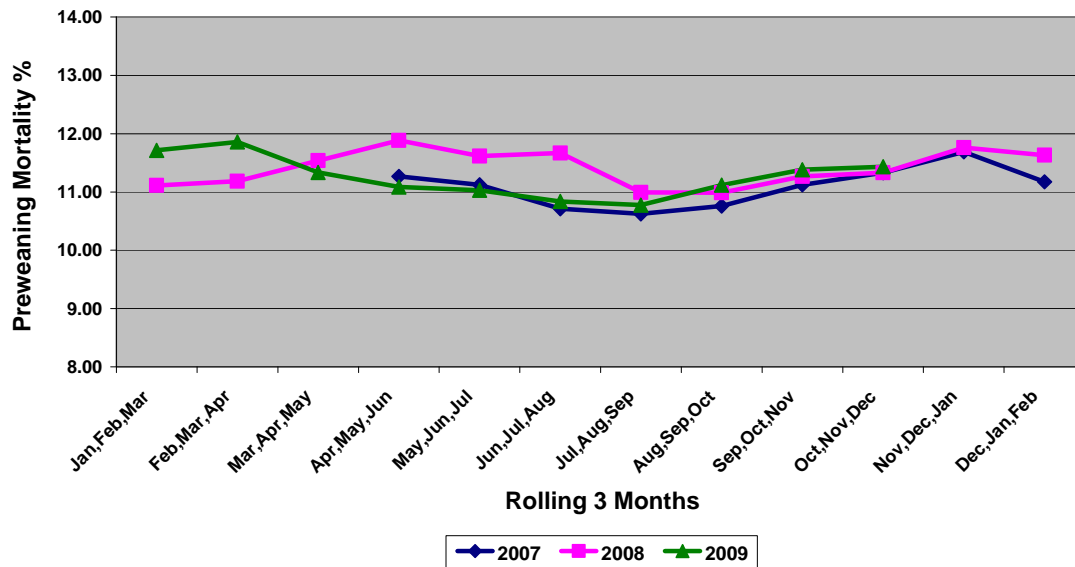


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. Whilst growing pig disease in association with Porcine Circovirus Type II has, in many cases, caused catastrophic losses to many farms, numerically deaths before weaning have traditionally represented the majority of deaths on many breeding units.

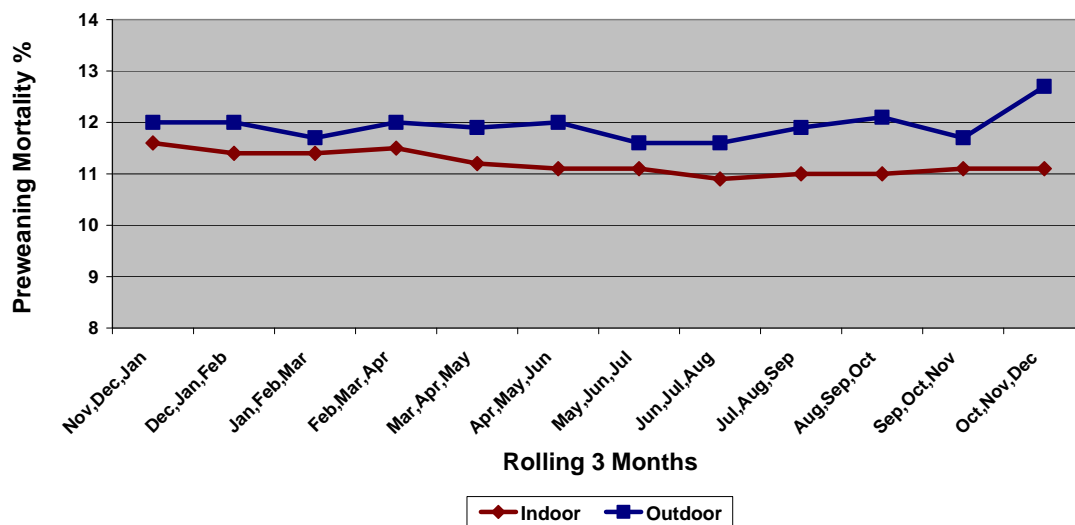
NADIS veterinary surgeons collect data from farms visited on a routine basis and the data is collated centrally. Detailed information now spans nearly three years of surveillance.

Graph 1 - Preweaning Mortality - Rolling 3 months



As can be seen from Graph 1, year on year mortality has changed very little with overall death rates varying between 10.6 and 11.9 for all breeding herds surveyed. Within this pattern there is a distinct seasonal influence with lows tending to be recorded in summer, although the dip in mortality in 2008 occurred later than in the two years either side. Given that warm weather is often associated with litter desertion in outdoor herds and hygiene problems in farrowing crates, this decline is perhaps a little surprising. The biggest danger to the newborn piglet is chilling and this data may suggest that temperature control and heat lamp management still has some way to go to reduce death rates.

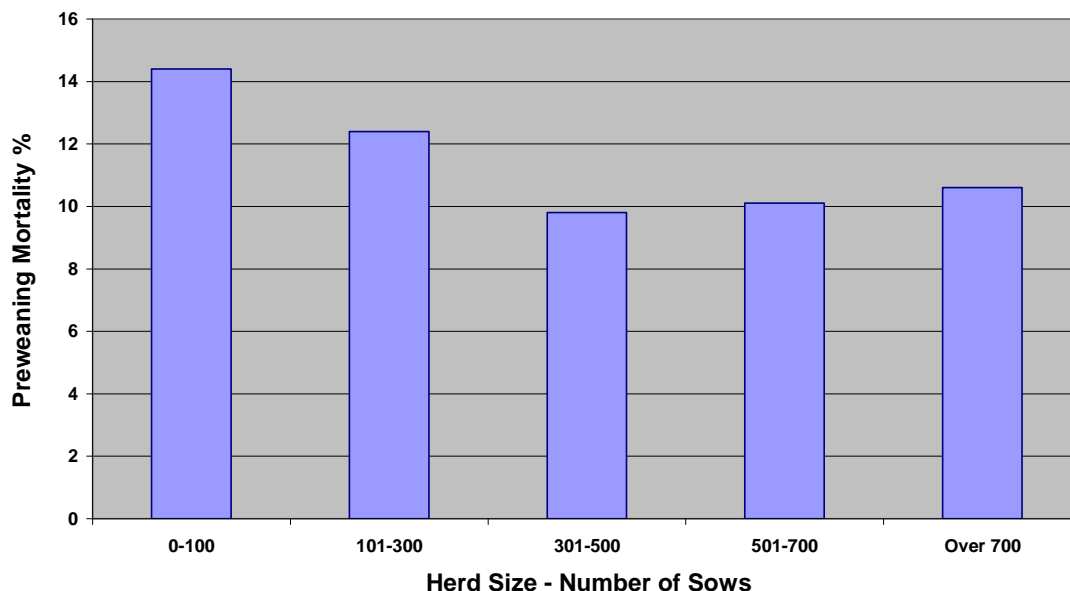
**Graph 2 - Preweaning Mortality 2009
Indoor v Outdoor**



Looking in more detail at the differences between indoor and outdoor herds in 2009 (graph 2) it can be seen that outdoor herds consistently lose more pigs than their indoor counterparts (by as much as 1.6 percentage points). Particularly disturbing is the most recent data for outdoor herds, which shows a marked jump in mortality in the final quarter of 2009. This is

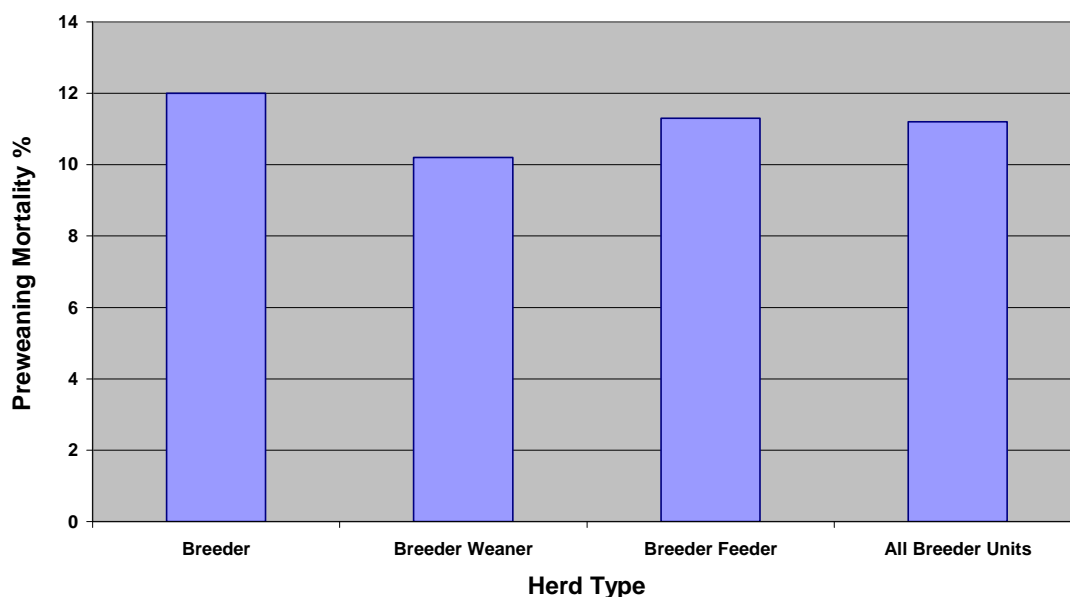
consistent with the extreme wet weather in late autumn but it should be born in mind that the cold weather and snow that came before Christmas will not have had any major effects yet on these figures. Freezing weather on wet ground would be expected to impede piglet survival further and given the high proportion of farms now farrowing outdoors in the UK, it is reasonable to assume that slaughter pig numbers might decline in the spring and early summer. (It should also be noted that there is always a far greater chance of under-recording preweaning mortality outdoors as dead piglets may not be found or can even be eaten by sows.)

Graph 3 - Preweaning Mortality - Herd Size



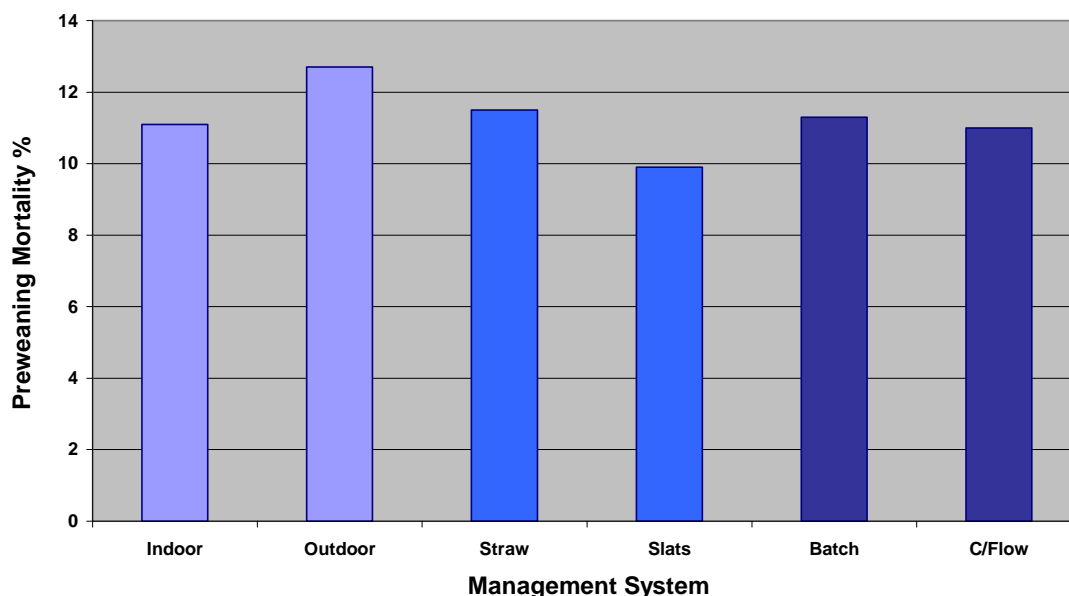
Graph 3 indicates highest levels of deaths in smaller breeding herds, which would be consistent with fewer opportunities to cross-foster and less time concentrated in farrowing areas as all jobs need doing at the same time.

Graph 4 - Preweaning Mortality - Herd Type



Breeder weaner units show a marginal advantage in terms of lower deaths than breeder feeder herds (graph 4) but the breeding only units (of which most will be outdoor herds) suffer greater losses.

Graph 5 - Preweaning Mortality - Management System



Sows kept on straw (during pregnancy, which of course includes outdoor herds) are associated with higher losses than those on slats during pregnancy (graph 5). Surprisingly, batch farrowing systems, which are claimed to allow better use of labour as major jobs such as farrowing become concentrated in short time periods, show a marginally worse mortality rate than the more traditional continuous flow systems.

East Anglia – with its higher prevalence of outdoor herds – reports higher death rates than North East England, although not perhaps as high as might have been expected.

Pre-weaning mortality in breeding herds in the field has, over many years, shown itself to be highly responsive to intensive stockkeeper training and input on an individual farm basis. With farm profitability now consistently achievable it can be hoped that training and time to do the job will allow a more widespread reduction in piglet deaths.

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