



Target

Farm

Action

A monthly digest of practical advice for pig farmers from BPEX

Spotlight on the farrowing house

Attention to detail in the farrowing house is vital for piglet survival and litter performance.

It must be a priority to ensure farrowing house staff have the skills they need and know what to look for.

This month the BPEX Knowledge Transfer team has helped two units, one in the north and the other in the south west, to train staff – some with experience and some who were working in the farrowing house for the first time.

The farrowing house 'tool kit' was discussed first before getting on to the unit. Firstly, managing sow condition at farrowing is very important. Units must ensure energy requirements are met in late gestation and focus on general husbandry and care of sows, particularly gilts and nervous sows.

Further practical areas in which all staff should be confident include:

- Cross fostering for size as well as numbers
- Spilt suckling
- The content of the farrowing box

- Timing farrowings to reduce still births
- Ensuring colostrum intake
- Recording mortality and piglet age at death
- Creep feeding
- Tail length at docking

There were a couple of useful outcomes for the units.

On one unit heat mats were found to be 43 – 45 degrees centigrade, so they have been turned down. On the other unit, it was farrowing day so there was an opportunity to demonstrate an internal intervention and the new farrowing house man there is continuing to work alongside the manager to make sure he benefits from as much training and experience as possible.

For more information and advice, download factsheets from the Action for Productivity series at www.bpex.org.uk:

- No 14 Newborn management
- No 24 Improving KPIs – pre-weaning
- No 26 Improving KPIs – breeding herd



Examining critical factors of weaning to service outdoors

The critical factors for success from weaning to service were discussed at an Oxford Training club meeting on AI for outdoor producers.

These units all shared similar systems in the same region with the same genetics.

But there seemed to be a lot of differences between units when it came to the post weaning period.

Different feeding methods included providing 6kg per day to dry sows from wean to first day of service and providing 3kg after weaning, building up by 0.5kg per day to first day of service.

There were also different ways of managing boar contact:

- No boar contact until day of service
- Continuous fence line boar contact

- Some fence line contact depending on the paddocks used

For more advice on boar contact management download the factsheet on detection mating area from the BPEX website.

It is important for all units to give time to AI and all those in this group focused resources very well to achieve this.

The use of records throughout the weaning to service period is essential as a problem solving mechanism, as it is often found that perceived problems are different from real problems.

And producers should also give thought to practical aspects such as service tent design and layout – to help with handling and keeping sows calm and make the process more efficient on service day.

Join your local pig discussion group - everybody is welcome

Do you know where your local BPEX Pig Club or discussion group meets?

Pig unit owners and stockpeople are all welcome to attend.

Just one example of a North Yorkshire pig club has a variety of practical topics planned for the 2010 season:

These will include gilt management, euthanasia and energy efficiency.

For the latter, an FEC representative is due to come and introduce the DIY energy efficiency manuals for producers and this will be followed up at a later date with discussions of the outcome

And every meeting throws up a useful discussion to help solve problems on farm.

At the club's latest meeting, a

virtual farm tour (video footage from a local unit) raised the topic of managing the weaned pig and what to do with the poor ones.

Producers agreed how important it is to check there is enough trough space at weaning.

There were suggestions of feeding porridge in long troughs at ground level (gutter lines) and feeding it three times a day – little and often.

Check out the BPEX events calendar on the homepage at www.bpex.org.uk to see what is happening in your area.

There is bound to be an event not too far away where you can catch up with other local producers over a bite to eat and pick up some ideas to help improve your farm's productivity at the same time!

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