

The health and welfare prospects of farmed pigs in England

The UK's Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) raises a statutory levy from farmers, growers, and others in the agricultural supply chain, and uses the revenue gained to carry out research and development, for farm-level knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange, and for various marketing activities. The British Pig Executive (BPEX) is the AHDB division responsible for pigs, and one of its aims is to drive the demand for English pork and pig meat products within Great Britain and internationally.

In August 2011, BPEX published a health and welfare strategy for the pig industry in England: '20:20 Pig Health and Welfare: A Vision for 2020'. An overriding message is the importance of collaborative relationships between producers in England and others in the supply chain, and with the pig industries in Scotland and Wales. It is hoped that by working co-operatively together the following Vision may be achieved: 'An English pig herd where health and welfare are continually improving, which results in better pig performance, the production of a safe and quality product, reduced environmental impact and increasing sustainability of an industry that contributes fully to national food security'. It is noted that where there are barriers to improving pig health, it is not through lack of knowledge but rather lack of implementation and co-ordination between pig-farms.

Eight key objectives are presented and the means by which the industry and BPEX may deliver these objectives are described under the following headings: health; welfare; food safety and public health; surveillance; biosecurity; facilities and infrastructure; medicines; research; knowledge transfer; and integrated approach. Tail biting, tail docking, teeth clipping, freedom around farrowing, and the husbandry of entire males of greater than 80 kg continue to be subjects of welfare concern. It is recommended that research continues in these areas.

BPEX hopes that the 20:20 strategy will enable the pig industry to set clear, sustainable and achievable outcome targets for 2020 in six important areas: disease elimination; disease impact reduction; welfare outcomes; supply chain; food safety; and environment. BPEX, together with the industry, aims to develop detailed business plans for each area and the outcome targets will be monitored by the British Pig Health and Welfare Council. The Report concludes by listing a number of significant milestones, which are given as next steps for the industry during 2012:

- Establish baselines for health and welfare outcomes;
- Agree specific targets for 2020 health and welfare outcomes;
- Extend the Health Improvement Project to all of England;
- Complete development of a system for measuring welfare outcomes;
- Develop a National Control Programme for *Salmonella* in pigs that is approved by the European Commission for introduction in 2012;
- Establish robust mechanisms for routinely evaluating and scoring biosecurity practices on pig farms and establish baseline national biosecurity status on pig farms;
- Review health and welfare research and agree a road map for research in this area from 2013 to 2020;
- Develop accredited health and welfare training modules;
- Review of progress towards the objectives and targets of the strategy.

20:20 Pig Health and Welfare: A Vision for 2020 (August 2011). A4, 19 pages. British Pig Executive (BPEX). Available online at: http://www.bpex.org.uk/articles/301566/2020_Pig_Health_and_Welfare.aspx.

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