

Producers for Profit

Business improvement through staff development

Oct 07

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Seeing is believing.....

Virtual tours and sharing problems with other producers may seem like a concept for the future, but for a group of Yorkshire farmers the tours are providing the real answers to today's problems.

A group of stockmen that are used to benchmarking together on a regular basis, took a new direction in learning about pig production. The group, formed by the Garth Vet group, each spent time taking photos of their units focusing on the farrowing house.

Using these photos, virtual tours of each unit were given, detailing their systems and routines. The virtual tours created lots of discussion and banter about who had the best system.

All the stockmen agreed that actually seeing other facilities and discussing them was an extremely valuable tool in improving their own systems. The next step for the group, where all farms have similar health status, is to organise farm walks. For this the stockmen are now working together, with the vets, to write a set of appropriate biosecurity rules.



Improving feed efficiency

"You can so much better relate to the other's performance data now"

"I thought I was the only one still using this system!"

Producers commenting on the tours.



Young NPA meeting

Plus:

- Health Planning
- Management training
- Improving Key performance indicators
- New funding available for training
- News in Brief

Attitude not Aptitude

Finding skilled staff is an industry problem, but what if the right *attitude* is all that's required?

As a farm worker, Richard Heading thought a move in to pigs would be difficult without direct experience. However, enthusiasm and willingness to learn proved enough when he found an employer looking for these attributes over skills.

Richard completed a training needs analysis and identified areas for improvement. Feeling cautious about training, Richard took part in a veterinary medicine workshop initially. In addition to gaining a Certificate of Competence, Richard's confidence and ability to work by himself has significantly improved and he is now happier attending workshops on general pig production.

However, whilst he values the off-farm learning he knows the biggest learning curve happens when he returns to the unit. **Being allowed to try ideas** on a small scale means that he **learns practically about what will and won't work** relatively quickly. Speaking about the changes, his manager says *'Richard now has the ability and confidence to deal with issues as they arise. This is a big benefit to the business as not only is he more productive, but I am confident leaving him and now I have time to get on with other matters'*

The full case study is available on-line at www.bpex.org.uk



Managing Health



Animal health is back on the agenda - for all the wrong reasons - but we should be thinking about it everyday, not just when there's a crisis.

Poor herd health hits your bottom line hard through reductions in growth rates and feed conversion efficiency - that is until now. BPEX, in conjunction with DEFRA are now promoting the benefits of improving herd health as part of the Farm Health Planning initiative.

Producer groups are an integral part of the initiative and are being established to allow farmers to meet and discuss relevant health issues. Financial support is also available towards the expenses of

producers involved in the early stages. The main aim of the groups is to utilise each individual's practical experience of health management for the benefit of the entire group. The meetings give participants a forum to develop their pig management skills – and collect PIPR points. As the meetings progress, targets for improvements in herd health will be set by farmers and measured through health plans, helping to **improve productivity and profit on farm.**

One of the groups already formed have decided their focus will be on respiratory disease. Their initial meeting was spent assessing the strengths and weaknesses of buildings in combating respiratory problems from photos brought in by the members of the group, which was deemed very useful by all attending.

For more details, log on to the BPEX website, www.bpex.org.uk, or contact:

Ian Russell 07795 335836



Improving feed efficiency

Throughout October and November, the BPEX knowledge transfer team will be running a series of workshops across the country on, *Improving feed efficiency*. For details about your nearest workshop contact:

kt@bpex.org.uk

New funding for skills and knowledge transfer

More than £600 million is available over the next seven years to make agriculture more competitive and sustainable. The cash is available from the Rural Development Programme England (RDPE). Funding for the livestock sector is focused on three key areas: Competitiveness, Nutrient Management, and Animal Welfare. Potential funding ideas include:

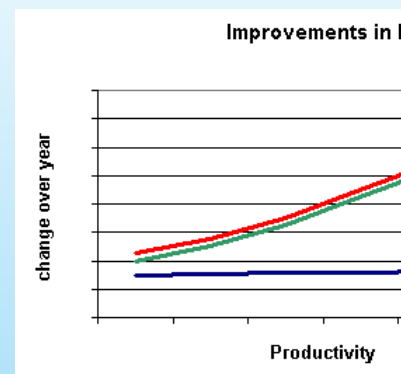
- vocational training, information actions, farm modernisation
- adding value to agricultural products
- development of new products, processes and technologies.

BPEX is working with the regional development agencies (RDA's) to ensure money is available to support training/knowledge transfer. Further information can be found using the links on the RDA website:

www.EnglandRDAs.com

Aiming for

Moving from average performance possibility for companies



While the average producer's productivity this graph highlights that those in the top companies see similar increases when they gain knowledge of their staff.

Reported improvements resulting from staff training can be found on the website or why not get involved in training

After the abattoir... what happens next?

Lifting the tailgate generally signals the end of your involvement with the pigs, but can knowing what happens next help you in the future? The young NPA decided to find out more.

A group of 20 young producers visited Tulip's Ashton under Lyne abattoir to take a closer look at what happens. The aim of the visit was to discuss the marketing process and see the benefits of the British Pig Health Scheme first hand.

Tim Blyth of Tulip arranged a full tour and two of the biggest talking points were the gas killing system and the quality of slap marks. Attempting to read slap marks on the carcasses highlighted the importance of correct and quality marks to everybody!

Using samples from the morning's kill vet Guy Wade-West explained the common ailments, and their implications, seen in commercial pigs. Conditions such

as pleurisy, abscesses, EP, Pericarditis and milk spot were all seen. Everybody agreed that seeing the conditions for real rather than on pictures emphasised the impact on the pig and production very strongly.

Tim Blyth followed up with a presentation about the pig market, which also created a good discussion about how to market products and the future demands. As with all the young NPA meetings there was a chance for everybody to catch up over dinner and a few drinks at the end of the day.

The Young NPA

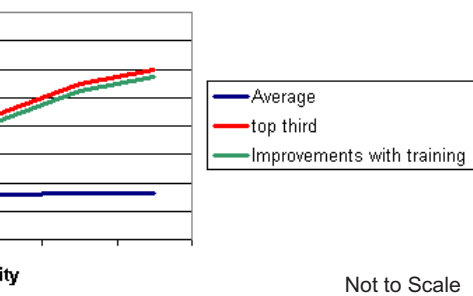
The Young NPA is a group of young producers and other people in the industry which meets a couple of times a year. Events are arranged at the request of members and in the past have included visits to: the House of Lords, Harper Adams College, Denmark and Belgium. Membership of the Young NPA(as an associate member) is £20/ year including Pig World. For further information or to become a member please contact: **Eddie Felts: 0247 685 8780**



For the Top?

Performance indicators towards the top third is a key indicator for companies willing to invest in staff.

Improvements in Productivity 2006-2007



Productivity has improved marginally over the past year. The top third are continuously improving. Many companies when they focus on improving the skills and training of their staff. Skills development can be seen on the BPEX website. Contact us for training and see the benefits for yourself?

Management Training

Developing staff is one way to improve the business, but improving management can be the key to business survival.

Businesses using management training find their managers can develop and retain staff better and are able to promote internally, helping to maintain consistency and efficiency of the unit. As a result of increasing requests, BPEX is now offering training opportunities for management and supervisory staff such as:

- Coaching and developing staff
- Introducing supervision (2 day)
- The self manager
- Getting the most out of people

A full list of courses and content are available on the BPEX website or can be mailed out on request. If you are interested in any of these courses, either as an individual or for a business please contact:

Tess Howe, 07779 321078

Enthusied, Registered and Raring to go

Agskills produces the first 40 people registered for the new certificates of competence.

Agskills members have always believed that training is a vital part of the industry's future, and their staff are now gaining formal recognition through the new NPTC qualifications. So far 40 are fully registered with a steady flow of people continuing to come forward. Registrations have been completed for both the Stage 1 Basic Stockmanship and Welfare as well as various units for the Stage 2 Pig Husbandry Skills. Once registered, the candidates are using the training manuals, available from BPEX, to compare and contrast with their everyday tasks. Everyone is finding the manuals valuable since they frequently refresh their own knowledge or bring something new to discussions. The new qualification and manuals have certainly stimulated a lot of people, which is why more are signing up.

This is reflected in comments from two youngsters new to the pig industry, Hannah Sutton and Gary Morgan, who work for D Black and Sons Ltd.

"these new certificates of competence have given us a buzz to get on with the basic course so we can move on to the pig husbandry one".

Add to this comments from Brian Brazier and Michael Close (who work for Midland Pig Producers Ltd), who have a tremendous level of experience between them (over 60 years!),

"This looks good. We like the practical training and also like the look of the practical side of how the assessments are carried out. Great for us".

So from the young to the experienced, the enthusiasm for training is spreading. The pig industry consultation "From Sustainability to Sustained Ability" identified training as vital and this is now available to all. The new certificates of competence really are worthwhile, so what are you waiting for?

For more information about Agskills, Contact:

Dr Brian Vernon: fmvern@btinternet.com

Certificates of Competence:

- are designed specifically for the pig industry, by the industry itself
- are split into three stages
- have a modular format to ease training
- can be made specific to your needs
- relevant to the practical skills required in today's industry.



Left to right, Gary Morgan, Julian Hagger (farm manager) and Hannah Sutton (D Black and Sons Ltd)

In brief:

Year of Food and Farming

Teaching youngsters where their food comes from is vital - they are the consumers of tomorrow. The Year of Food and Farming, starting in September, aims to introduce children and their families to the industry. If you want to get involved with this scheme contact Tess Howe.

If you would like more information about staff development, or have an article for the newsletter please contact Tess: tess_howe@bpex.org.uk or 07779 321078

Transport Legislation

Did you realise if you drive your pigs over 40 miles (65 km) then you need a Certificate of Competence in Animal transport? The new legislation comes into place in January 2008. Further details can be found on the defra website or by contacting Tess Howe

Farm Walks

Stockmen in the Eastern Region took a rare opportunity to look at other people's units during a series of farm walks organised by the EEPTG. Staff left their managers at home and soon realised there is always a different way to do things - either rightly or wrongly!