

# Producers for Profit

Business improvement through staff development

July 2008

## In this Issue



### Juggling your staff?



### Vermin control



### Grower finisher management

#### Plus:

- Reproductive management
- Skills strategy
- New club in the South West
- In Brief



## Policy makers come together

In a unique initiative, BPEX is running 'Introduction to the Industry' days for policy makers and advisors to aid their understanding of practical pig production.

So far, over 30 representatives from the Environment Agency, Defra, HSE, Lantra and the RSPCA have attended the courses run in Essex and Nottinghamshire.

An overview of production systems, industry terms, financial aspects and legislative issues was followed by the chance to view practical production on farm. For some, this revealed an acute lack of understanding about the real state of the pig industry and highlighted the impact of different policies on production and how, in extreme circumstances, they can contradict each other.

The day was rounded off with a brief review of the proactive approach the industry is taking to help itself in terms of environmental strategies, staff development and knowledge transfer.

**"It's easy for policy makers to sit in their ivory towers in London. The day gave a real hands-on experience and a better understanding of the totality of the industry. It also highlighted the benefits of partnership working. These kind of events are invaluable."** Stephen Plant, Defra Cost Sharing Policy Advisor



Further workshops are planned, for more information contact: **Tess Howe: 07779 321078**

## Are you ready for a challenge? - exciting new pig industry award

The opportunities for challenging and changing current ways of thinking in agriculture has never been so great. And one organisation that has been at the forefront of challenging the status quo is Nuffield Farming Scholarships.

So it is exciting to announce that BPEX has teamed up with Nuffield to create a Nuffield Award specifically for the pig industry.

The Nuffield Trust awards study grants to people, regardless of their academic experience, wanting to further the practice

of agriculture through travel. On their return, scholars spread their knowledge widely and provide industry leadership.

The criteria for a successful candidate are simple: enthusiastic, willing and able. Support for potential scholars is provided during the application process, and continues throughout the whole experience.

Application forms can be downloaded from **[www.nuffieldscholar.org](http://www.nuffieldscholar.org)** or to discuss a potential project contact Meryl Ward: **[merylward@farmline.com](mailto:merylward@farmline.com)**



## Vermin - Are you in control ?

A practical approach was taken at a recent rodent control training session for farmers.



Rats and mice not only carry diseases which can affect production, but they can also cause significant damage to

buildings and equipment. A good vermin control plan is therefore important for all farms.

Over the course of the day, participants discussed: types of rodent, prevention and curative control, the legal side of vermin control, storage and transport of pesticides, records and on-site work.

The day was completed with a practical assignment developing a control plan for a commercial grain store. This practical work gave the participants the skills to improve their own plans on farm.

In addition to rodents, vermin control should also consider birds, which can cause problems, especially in outdoor production systems.

As a result of producer requests, BPEX is currently working, in conjunction with a pest control expert, to develop a workshop on bird control and provide the opportunity for producers to discuss minimising the effects birds of prey and pest birds have on outdoor production.

Further details about rodent control courses can be found from your local agricultural training provider. To find more about the bird control workshop contact:

**Helen Thoday: 0797 3701202**

## Reproductive Management

The latest BPEX Workshop, in conjunction with Gemma Morton from Garth Vets, was for a group of producers at the Ship Inn at Shiptonthorpe. Gemma explained the physiology of the sow after weaning before presenting three case studies to the group for discussion:

- Expanding the sow herd
- Seasonal effect on reproduction
- Parvo virus in the sow herd

In small groups, the case studies were discussed and management ideas drawn together. These ideas were then explained to the rest of the group and the advantages and disadvantages of each debated.

The importance of recording was noted by all participants as this allows people to identify the cause of problems or possibly prevent them before they become an issue. If you would like to attend a similar session contact the KT team: [kt@bpex.org.uk](mailto:kt@bpex.org.uk)



## Skills strategy crosses sector boundaries

**Having taken the lead developing the pig industry skills strategy, Chairman of the training strategy group, Richard Longthorp, is now helping the National Farmers' Union (NFU) develop a skills strategy for all sectors of agriculture.**

**Paul Temple, NFU Vice-President, chaired the first meeting of the Skills Forum for agriculture and horticulture on 20 May. The NFU-led forum is a direct response to frustration among training providers, farmers and funders about uncoordinated training projects and low recognition for skills as a business asset.**

**Richard Longthorp, the leader of the Pig Industry's Skills Initiative and an NFU member, has been in discussions with the top brass at NFU for some months convinced that, if the NFU add its weight to debate, then many of the current issues surrounding skills development for the whole of agriculture will be far more readily resolved.**

**Richard is delighted with this latest initiative from the NFU staff and congratulates them on their foresight, vision and leadership in taking up the skills challenge. Richard will be sitting on the Skills Forum and will be chairing the working group charged with drafting a rationale and vision for that Forum**

## Combining clients to improve knowledge exchange

Two Yorkshire vet practices have come together to create their own pig club for their clients to attend.

With help from BPEX KT manager Lis Ravn, Howells Veterinary Surgeons and Holmefield Farm Services held their first club meeting discussing - 'EP vaccination, is it still a necessity?'

This topic was chosen by the club members, in light of the recent PCV2 vaccines and the ongoing vaccination programme being supported by BPEX.

Thijs van Gasteren from Howells Vets gave a brief presentation to the 12 producers which led to an open discussion around the table. Although starting on PCV2, discussions also moved on to other production issues over the meal that was provided at the end of the event

The group has already scheduled a date for the next meeting, and decided that the opening topic for the next meeting will be Salmonella.

**Contact Lis Ravn: 07891 656784**



**Clients of Howells Veterinary Surgeons and Holmefield Farm Services meeting together**

## Managing the grower/finisher Pig

A recent BPEX workshop in Boroughbridge attracted nearly 30 pig producers and staff to discuss the challenges faced when managing the growing pig.

The workshop, organised by BPEX and facilitated by Hugh Crabtree (Farmex), provided both technical information and interactive exercises, allowing the exchange of practical advice among participants.

The workshop dealt with the four main areas involved with producing finishing pigs:

- needs and challenges of the pig
- food and water
- environment
- health

These open BPEX workshops are aimed at stock people – the staff who work with the pigs every day.

Already some units are seeing the benefits of getting their staff engaged, with many using the simple take home messages to help instigate change and improvements on-farm.

If you would like to attend BPEX workshops get in touch with your regional KT manager for dates.

**Email: [kt@bpex.org.uk](mailto:kt@bpex.org.uk)**



**Organisers of the South West producer group Rick Sanderson, Helen Thoday and Oliver Bown.**

## New group for South West producers

Guest speaker Rick Sanderson, Pork Chain Business Development Manager for PIC (UK), gave a lively presentation about the pork supply chain to more than 20 young producers attending the first West Country young pig producers dinner held in Exeter recently.

Rick spoke about the interaction between the physical environment and genetics in influencing meat quality and highlighted the fact that producers can control about 75 – 80% of this through the control of diet, housing and stress. Other effects include pre and post slaughter handling, carcass chilling and maturation. He also explained that fine-tuning your current production methods will help your unit to be as efficient as possible.

It is anticipated the event, organised by Helen Thoday BPEX KT manager and Oliver Bown of Thames Valley Cambac (TVC), will result in a new group of producers forming. To join the group or find out more about the next meeting contact:

**Helen Thoday, 07973 701202**

**"This was a very informative and useful event. It was also good to meet other producers and compare practices as there is little opportunity to do this. I hope there will be more meetings like this."**

**John Dunning, 300 indoor sows in Devon**

## Making the most of your staff

For many managers in the pig industry lack of time often prevents the provision of effective training. But as a number of South West managers found out recently, this can be a short-sighted view which will result in a lack of skilled staff and reduce the unit's efficiency.

For the supervisors and managers attending the Coaching and Development workshops, a number of simple ideas were highlighted to help make better use of their key resource - their staff.

These included investing time in:

- setting good standards of practice,
- setting realistic targets,
- creating action plans,
- coaching and encouragement,
- one to one meetings with staff members

All of which will help improve skills, confidence and productivity on the farm.

These workshops were run as part of an ongoing training initiative in the South West, which combines stockman and managerial development. This combined approach not only means all staff are included, but helps the units realise the full potential of staff development when carried out correctly.

**Contact: Tess Howe, 07779 321078**



**Managers and supervisors getting to grips with team work**

**"I've never been to anything like this before and it has been a real eye opener. It has given me lots of useful tips and I will definitely be putting them into practice on my unit."**

**Andy Mitchell, Budeford Estates Ltd**

**"I have been in pigs all my life and we have been trained on many things, this is the first time staff training has been offered and organised and it has been excellent"**

**Ernie Dymond, owner of 700 sows**

## In Brief

### Pig Clubs

Rising levels of enthusiasm for pig clubs may not have been expected in the current climate, but increasingly producers are relying on these groups for sound practical advice.

Members are seeing the benefits of concentrating on the issues they can control, rather than worrying about those they can't i.e. feed price.

With over 16 producer clubs running across the country, why don't you get involved?

### PIPR Prize Draw

Attending the Pig Fair is a valuable part of professional development for both producers and industry advisors.

As such PIPR members who signed the attendance register were rewarded with both PIPR points and the chance to win a Red Letter Day Gift Voucher by entering a free Prize draw.

The lucky winner for this year's prize was industry consultant advisor Nick White (Pork Chain Solutions).

### Funding

BPEX is pleased to announce that it has received funding to support skills development in the Yorkshire and Humber region over the next two years.

The money is now available for a variety of skills development and knowledge exchange events.

If you organise these events or are a producer wanting to take advantage of this funding please contact Tess Howe. Support for similar schemes in other regions is currently sought.

If you would like more information about staff development, or have an article for the newsletter please contact Tess: 07779 321078 or [tess.howe@bpex.org.uk](mailto:tess.howe@bpex.org.uk)



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