

Winning ways to reduce waste

It has never been more important to improve efficiency and reduce waste. With this in mind, BPEX organised a workshop for producers in Devon.

Fran Baird from the George Vet Group met with staff from WJ Watkins, Cross Park, to discuss cost and value on a pig unit. All inputs were represented to illustrate how essential it is to improve efficiency and reduce waste throughout production.

Attendees were encouraged to participate in the meeting using handheld voting kit borrowed from Boehringer Ingelheim; this allowed the 'audience' to answer questions in the style of 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' meaning that individuals could have a go at answering without feeling intimidated by others in the group.

Wayne Tucker, unit manager of Cross Park, thought that it was "a great way to run a meeting" and that the voting system "allowed everyone to have a go and made it a good laugh". The questions, set by Fran, covered everything from how many rats two rats could produce in a year to how much 'a scoop' of feed really was.

The idea behind asking such wide ranging questions was to raise awareness of how critical efficiency and waste management is through all stages of production.

Fran said "it's not really who wants to be a millionaire?, rather 'who wants to make a living out of pigs?'; reducing avoidable waste and maximising biological efficiency is the key message".

Phil Baynes from SCA NuTec, Jon Kenny from PIC and Oli Bown from TVC were also present to chat to staff.



Paul Curtis and Ryan Hill, winner and runner up of the quiz

In Brief...

ADAS workshops

A series of 10 early evening workshops (5 pm to 7.30 pm), sponsored by Defra and organised by ADAS, BPEX and Vetscore, are running during February and March. They will be covering the health and welfare of finished pigs and are free to all producers and unit staff. Contact Lynne Holmes for information. **Tel:** 01522 751374 or **Email:** lynne.holmes@adas.co.uk

Women and Work

The Women and Work project, managed by Lantra, is targeted at those who wish to progress in an occupation where it is widely recognised that few females have highly skilled or managerial jobs. Lantra provides up to £1,000 worth of funding and support from a personal skills coach. For more information contact Skills Coach, Tim Prior. **Tel:** 0845 458 7485.

Pig Industry Strategy Group

In 2005 industry representatives came together to form this group, three years on it has accomplished a huge amount. The group's passion means that it will continue to develop initiatives that will enhance the skills of those working in the industry, whilst developing the industry as a whole. For more information contact Richard Longthorp. **Tel:** 01430 433030

If you would like more information about staff development, or have an article for the newsletter, contact Miriam Drewett: 01908 844749 or kt@bpex.org.uk



Producers for Profit January 2009



Producers for Profit

Business improvement through staff development

Jan 2009

In this issue



How good's your DIY?!



Hands on vet & med



Waste Watchers

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Trainee of the Year *by Richard Longthorp*

It has been suggested that I am impatient and prone to occasional bouts of frustration and grumpiness at the pace of progress...

But two recent events have convinced me that as far as the pig industry skills development programme is concerned we are fast approaching that defining moment when a gnarled and grumpy old git from Yorkshire could see that grump of frustration turn into a smile of satisfaction!

At the Trainee of the Year presentation, held in Westminster, there was a genuine buzz in the room, not just from the winners and their employers but from all present. A buzz that demonstrated that, despite all the problems facing the industry, there are people and businesses determined to prosper and develop in spite of the challenges.

A buzz that was not only a reflection of success *per se* but itself reflected the consequently heightened aspirations of all and the inspiration drawn from those successes. As for the winners, well I am absolutely certain that had it not been for many their first visit to such an awe inspiring place, there would have been fists punching the air and victory rolls from all - and that's just the employers! *Continued on page 2*



Lord Rooker, Brian Geary & winner Zoltan Lovas

LandSkills RDPE funding

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) provides the opportunity to utilise Defra funds for skills development via the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).

Each RDA is taking a slightly different approach in tendering for projects, however the final objectives are very similar.

All types of skills development are being considered, but they fall into two groups defined by wider Government initiatives: vocational and higher skills training. Vocational training, aimed at stockpeople and supervisors, is about developing basic skills such as tractor driving; the higher skills training is directed at managers and is about developing strategies to improve farm operation and implementation on farm.

Most of the RDAs are now accepting

applications for funding projects; anyone can apply. BPEX is currently applying in each region on behalf of the pig industry and will manage the delivery of training and skills development.

We are well ahead in the Yorkshire and Humber region with pig businesses and trainers already being invited to come forward with ideas as to how the funds could be best spent. Plans are progressing in the East of England, with BPEX forming part of a larger consortium which has been successful in the tender process.

In the South East, BPEX joined a consortium of organisations and is now setting up a range of courses in the area. If you would like to take part in a training session or would like to deliver training in the pig industry contact BPEX.

Tel: 01908 844133

BPEX would like to wish readers a happy and prosperous New Year



Trainee of the year From page 1

The fact that it was a joint award ceremony with the poultry industry actually added to the impact that the event had. Amongst the 70 or so guests there were some of the industry's biggest players.



Speaking at one of these events gives you a near unique opportunity to see the expressions on the faces of the audience. At that presentation I saw, possibly for the first time, a unanimous approval for what both the pig and poultry industries are trying to achieve through developing skills. And as I looked around to see people from all those big outfits who had given up their time to travel to London I realised that the show is definitely on the road and building up a head of steam that will soon become irresistible.

Training and development are rapidly becoming the norm. Nobody can afford to be left behind!



The Nuffield Experience

The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust awards around 20 Scholarships each year to enthusiastic and determined 22-45 year olds.

It provides travel and subsistence costs for a period of eight weeks in return for a written paper and the presentation of study findings at its annual Winter Conference.

Shortlisted candidates for the 2009 Nuffield Scholarship programme will be attending interviews later this month. Successful candidates will attend a group pre-briefing in early March before embarking on their solo studies and travels around the world.

For more information visit

<http://www.nuffieldscholar.org>

Cut costs without cutting corners

Farming is a 365 day/year activity and small daily savings can rapidly build to large annual savings.

Half an hour per day at the minimum wage, excluding employer's NI contributions, equates to just over £1,000/year, so it makes sense to analyse where efficiency savings can be made. A small investment could lead to a rapid and significant return, as proven by a recent study supported through the BPEX Innovation Fund.

Delta-innovation Ltd have now piloted an on-farm labour recording system to determine the efficiency savings that could be gained through better allocation of



paid labour in a range of different systems.

Because this new system standardises labour by units of output, pig units which are quite different can be

compared as well as those that are similar.

Data collected from these pilot farms indicate a significant potential for increases in labour efficiency

across pig units. Scaling up from potential weekly savings to annual savings, differences of at least one full-time equivalent were seen, even across similar units. Whilst in some cases the causes of this variation were clear (eg in relation to feed systems), in others it was less so.

Further Innovation Funding has been applied for to take the findings of this pilot study forward and build on what has been learned so far.

Hopefully it will enable managers to examine their labour allocation and productivity, leading to large, and much needed, annual savings!

Brush up on your DIY skills

DIY AI operations traditionally carry out less laboratory analysis for semen quality than professional AI centres. However, whether the AI is from a DIY or a professional operation, the outcome from using the AI must be the same - good conception rates and large litter sizes.

BPEX's Angela Cliff ran a series of workshops for DIY AI operators during the autumn. Participants practised basic laboratory techniques for semen quality assessment and prepared stained slides ready for morphology screening and identification of the most common abnormalities.

In addition, a review of the collection and processing procedures was undertaken, following 'HACCP' principles to identify the critical areas in the process, and the best practice procedures were discussed.



Further workshops are planned for 2009 and a DVD explaining what to look for under the microscope is available from BPEX.

If you're interested in participating or would like a copy of the DVD contact Angela
Tel: 07967 788 484

Hands on Vet & Med training

Staff from a number of outdoor units in the South West have been getting practical advice on injection technique, data sheet reading and anatomy of the pig thanks to a workshop organised by BPEX KT Manager Helen Thoday.

Handling piglets is not as easy on outdoor units as it is on indoor units so it is important that staff know the correct techniques to perform tasks effectively and efficiently. Jennie Batt of Larkmead Vets led the workshop, speaking about correct piglet dosing technique, needle selection and hospital/recovery pen management, amongst other things.

“ I sent four members of staff and all said they got a lot from it, another good training session! ”

Tom Allen, pig producer

One of the key topics was needle selection, as selecting the incorrect size for injecting sows is a common mistake made by producers. Jennie explained how crucial it is to select the right needle to ensure that the medication reaches the right place eg intra-muscular as opposed to the subcutaneous (fat) layer for it to be effective.

Training aids were used during the workshop, oranges gave participants the chance to practise their injection technique and a model pig with removable organs was used to demonstrate what parts of a pig are affected by different diseases.

Look out for more of these, and similar, workshops taking place somewhere near you, or if you want more information contact one of the BPEX Knowledge Transfer Team. **Email:** kt@bpex.org.uk.

Some of the props used during the workshop



Pregnancy scanning in the South West

After a request from a number of producers in the South West, Helen Thoday organised a pregnancy scanning training day at St David's Vet Practice, Exeter.

The afternoon allowed producers to learn from Andrew Carr, an experienced scanner from Larkmead Scanning Services, and to practise on sows at different stages of pregnancy.

Discussions over refreshments included the cost of empty days, farm policies for NIPs and current preg scanning routines. Tony O'Loughlin, practice director, was also present to discuss sow health, and Bob Gornall from Rotech spoke about the different scanners available.

Darren Cordingley, a pig unit manager from Somerset, said of the event: "I found the time with Andrew very interesting and I will definitely be investing in a real time scanner, I have Bob's number!"