



Net benefits piglet survival!

Farm facts

Name: Plantation Pigs
Location: Shackleford, Surrey
Farm size & enterprise: 320 sows breeding to finish, all outdoors

Benefits

- Piglet losses have fallen from 18% (of which 25% was attributed to foxes) to 9.5% (lowest recorded 5.8%)
- Sows are less stressed
- Improved staff morale

The system

A separate 1.2 metre high electrified net fence was erected about 40 cm outside the main fox fence. This was purchased reasonably cheaply from a local merchant (£55/roll). A standard charge of 6000 volts is put through the net. Matting was placed in gateways to reduce the formation of ruts, and electrified spring clips complete the circuit across the gateway for night time protection.

Key to success

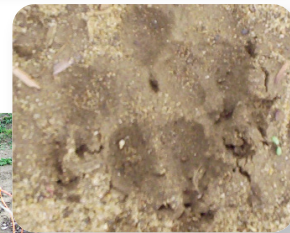
- Careful management of the grass near the fence
- Improvements to the farrowing field gateway
- A fox controller has been employed to reduce fox numbers
- Predators are now unable to slip through the lower strands, particularly badgers which are undeterred by high voltage fencing



Matting reduces the formation of ruts in gateways

“Missing piglets have always been a high percentage of our mortality; since we put up the extra fence the problem has virtually disappeared”
Doug Thomson, farm manager

Footprints were found inside the fox fence boundary



Having initially spaced the two fences 40 cm apart, the gap was increased to 1m to prevent the wind blowing the net onto the other fence.

Background

Predation from mammals has always been a major cause of missing piglets at Plantation Pigs. Badger and fox prints have been found inside the fox fence boundary and this activity was estimated to be contributing to 25% of piglet mortality.

The foxes were becoming bolder, with increased activity inside the fox fence during the day; a better strategy was required. To start with the unit improved overall management. This included more timely spraying and improving the gateway into the farrowing field, where tractor ruts were providing an entry point for predators. When the farrowing field moved, the unit originally opted for an upgraded fence using the classic 9-strand earth live system.

Although things improved slightly, missing piglets continued to be a problem, with losses spiking at 28% in some weeks.