



# Target

# Farm

# Action

A monthly digest of practical advice for pig farmers from BPEX

## Watch out: fears of double whammy

There are not just one but two major issues for abattoirs that could bounce back and hit producers.

The first is pleurisy, which is already incurring costs, and the other is the perennial problem of poor slapmarking.

Research at Cambridge Veterinary School has found pleurisy costs producers up to £2.26 per pig due to reduced carcase weight and increased age at slaughter.

This figure is based on an average pig within a batch that has a pleurisy prevalence of 10% and, bearing in mind that some batches can have prevalence greater than 10%, the costs can be even greater.

It is a large chunk to lose from the producer margins.

Pleurisy is a very painful condition and can cause the pig severe difficulty breathing, so it is also a welfare problem. The pleura, the lining between the lung and the chest wall, become inflamed and stick to the carcase wall.

This means further costs are incurred at the processing stage as the abattoir has to carry out extra trimming.

According to the research, pleurisy costs 29.8 p/per pig due to reduced line speed and increased disposal charges. Ultimately it is the pig producer who has to foot the bill for this.

Poorly slapmarked pigs are also straining processor resources and there is a similar

danger that producers' payments could be affected before too long.

It is the pig keeper's responsibility to ensure that every pig sent for slaughter has been clearly slapmarked with the DEFRA herd number.

The mark must be legible before **and** after slaughter, to allow clear identification of pigs and carcasses and provide traceability.

For more advice on slapmarking, visit <http://www.bpex.org.uk/publications/WorkInstructions.aspx> to download BPEX's 'Work Instruction 2: Slapmarking slaughter pigs'.

To start reducing losses from both pleurisy and slapmarking issues, sign up to the BPEX Pig Health Scheme (BPHS) now. Tel: 01463 233184.



## Are you registered?

Every pig producer must register with DEFRA as a user of feed under the Food Hygiene Regulations. Make sure your records are up-to-date to comply with the assurance schemes.

Many producers find they are non-

compliant when they have their annual inspection. But registration doesn't take long - it is handled by your Local Authority.

If you mix your own feed and include additives you should already be registered. If you use bought-in compound feeds, and

### Pleurisy

Key risk factors for **pleurisy** identified by the Cambridge research are (in no particular order):

- ✗ Farrow-to-finish systems
- ✗ Repeated mixing of pigs
- ✗ Repeated movement of pigs, even without mixing
- ✗ No all-in all-out policy

The research also identified some environmental factors that are **protective** against pleurisy:

- ✓ Cleaning finisher pens before refilling
- ✓ Disinfecting finisher pens before refilling
- ✓ Down-time grower pens before refilling
- ✓ Down-time finisher pens before refilling

### Slapmarking

A few of the points to think about to ensure good quality **slapmarks** are:

- ✓ Before use, check the slap marker is clean and all the pins are undamaged
- ✓ Set up the facilities to allow pig flow to be managed eg pigs passing in single file at a slow speed
- ✓ Ensure the area is well lit and protected from rain (wet skin = unclear marks)
- ✓ Slap each pig firmly and evenly, making contact squarely on both shoulders
- ✓ Re-apply ink to the slapmarker on a frequent basis using the inepad, ie after every or every other pig
- ✓ Clean the slap marker thoroughly after use eg with a wire brush in soapy water or by pressure washing

## Monitor and negotiate

Electricity costs money, so can you afford not to know how much you are using? Some producers in the East of England have come together as a group, enabling them to negotiate with their supplier to get Smart Meters or automatic meter readers installed on their units. The farmers can log on to view consumption/usage by the day, which is of value in itself, but as a group they are

able to negotiate better with electricity companies by showing what the group's usage and pattern of requirements is. As of 6th April this year any new building installation must by law have electricity meters fitted, but only for large commercial or larger farms. Within 10 years electricity meters will need to be fitted at the private dwelling point.

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Knowledge Transfer