

# Producers for Profit

Business improvement through staff development

Nov 2009

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## Chance of a lifetime

**A Nuffield Farming Scholarship is a life-changing opportunity to study and travel. Current pig-industry scholar Richard Hooper writes about his experience so far**

Twelve months ago my Nuffield Farming Scholarship odyssey began. I was over the moon when I was awarded the first BPEX/Merial sponsored award.

My personal study tour is titled: ***The Recruitment, Training and Retention of Quality Staff in the Pig Industry***. I started in the US at World Pork Expo in Iowa and travelled on to Nebraska and Illinois. I visited pig businesses ranging from 40 sows to over 100,000 sows, along with non-agricultural businesses, universities, levy-funded and government-funded bodies.

I found recruitment issues there depended largely on the demand for labour from other industries, but also on distance to work and the mainstream

perception that pig farming is a dirty physical job involving long hours.

Interestingly their answer to this common problem is for the National Pork Board to roll out a new 80-day induction program, with the aim to get the employee to do the job well then move onto a certification component i.e. start on the 'how' then move onto the 'why'.

My next visit is to Canada, so if anyone has any good contacts, particularly in Ontario, I would be grateful if you could let me know. When my scholarship was awarded I was told that I could look forward to a challenging and enjoyable experience that would open up a lifetime of new opportunities – so far so good!



***"I would encourage anyone who is passionate about the industry, and wants to take that next step, to apply for a Scholarship now; don't leave it too long as you have to be under 45. Please do not hesitate to contact me to find out more"***

***Richard Hooper, Nuffield Scholar:  
07967 301949***

## Don't miss out....

The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust (NFST) is now seeking applications from people who believe there is an exciting future in farming and hold a deep passion for their work.

John Stones, NFST Director, says: "Our scholars have the chance to explore an issue of genuine interest to them and to develop personally through study and travel. They will meet some of the world's leaders in their field and return with findings of benefit to their industry, their business and themselves."

The NFST awards around 20 Scholarships each year to people aged between 22 and 45, providing travel and subsistence costs for an eight-week period, in return for a written paper and a presentation at its Winter Conference. Closing date for applications is 15th November 2009.

BPEX will be sponsoring a pig-related project again this year. For further information log on to: **[www.nuffieldscholar.org.uk](http://www.nuffieldscholar.org.uk)**



# Nutrition of the young pig

Nutritionist Paul Toplis led the latest workshops in The East of England Pig Training Group's (EEPTG) Autumn programme. He highlighted an important theme - feeding the 7-30kg pig. With 70% of costs associated with feed, getting the right intake at this stage could be the difference between profit or loss.

Paul discussed the relationship between weaning weights and time to 100kgs; the group learned how 500g extra at weaning could reduce the time to 100kg by 6 days. The direct relationship between water intake and feed intake was also covered. It may seem an obvious concept, but do we all know our drinker flow rates? Are they delivering the 300-500 ml/minute required by a newly weaned piglet? Paul then shifted the focus to the poor intake immediately after weaning.

Many farms experience a delay of 2 – 4 days before creep intake is satisfactory, so this is one area that needs improvement in order to optimise growth potential. One suggestion was to adjust feeders so that 40% of the pan bottom is covered and pigs do not have to work the feeder excessively. These are just a couple of the outcomes from the meeting – if you want to know more or attend future workshops please contact:

**Colin Stone: 07881 780340**



# Landskills

Thanks to funding from the Department for Education, the region has seen a significant increase in the number of training opportunities available. The East Midlands Landskills programme, run by the East Midlands Landskills Producers Association, covers some of the most useful to the industry. The programme is a Competence-based



Keith Fisher explaining the butchery process during a recent training session at Uncle Henry's



## Yorkshire and Humber

The BPEX project with Landskills Yorkshire and Humber has seen 34 regional training events. BPEX now has a number of events for the industry contact BPEX, as you

# Breed and feed for South West managers

Trainee managers at Fawley Farms now have the inside track on what breeding and feed companies do. As part of the Fawley Farms Management Trainee Scheme, both PIC and BOCM Pauls were visited.

## PIC



L-R: Jon Kenny, Steve Ford, Fiona Glaves, Jason Gibson, Helen Thoday and Richard Barnett

The PIC visit began with an overview of the company and, importantly, how it supports the Fawley business. The managers were fascinated by the detail that goes into the PIC global genetic programme, which was explained by Fiona Glaves, the firm's Genetic Programme Manager.

Many topics were covered, rarely discussed before on farm, including gilt and terminal sire make up and how they compliment each other to produce the slaughter generation. Steve Ford, the UK GTC Manager concluded with a virtual stud tour, aptly titled 'From Penis to Parcel'.

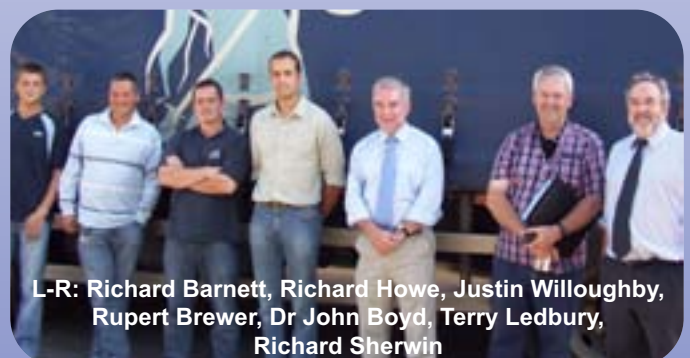
## BOCM Pauls

Next stop was a tour of the BOCM Pauls Radstock mill.

The group learnt all about mill operations, how the supply chain works, legislation the mill works within and Quality Assurance.

BOCM's Dr John Boyd ran a wide-ranging training session on nutrition, covering gilt nutrition, post service feeding and implantation, plus advice on winter feed curves and water intakes.

Helen Thoday: 07973 701202



L-R: Richard Barnett, Richard Howe, Justin Willoughby, Rupert Brewer, Dr John Boyd, Terry Ledbury, Richard Sherwin

## East Midlands

Funding from LandSkills East Midlands, regular opportunities are now on offer for all levels of staff.

LandSkills Training Initiative, co-ordinated by Ermine Farms, set up in conjunction with BPEX will allow all staff access to affordable, local and relevant training.

Topics, which can be found on the BPEX website, cover key areas of production and will be especially relevant for those workers aiming for their Certificates of Competence. If you have training requirements not already on the schedule please contact us to discuss your options.

All courses will be held at Uncle Henry's Farm Shop, Grayingham, Lincolnshire. Places on some courses are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment.

**Ermine Farms, 01652 640316**

## Member

BPEX has already helped more than 120 people access to funds in most regions, so if you could be eligible for significant funding.

[Tess.howe@bpex.org.uk](mailto:Tess.howe@bpex.org.uk)



New Landroc Gilts

Earsham Farm Park has a breeding herd of 550 sows, weans pigs at about 8kg and sells on at 40kg for finishing. Farm Manager Ewan Saile, talked about the unit's feeding, serving and weaning processes. He also highlighted the importance of recording to provide an accurate picture of how the unit is doing, what's working and what's not.

Since the last site move, there has been a significant reduction in pre-weaning mortality and an increase in the number of piglets weaned/sow/year. Conception rates have also improved, which has been put down to the fact that sows are now walked to holding paddocks rather than being herded into trailers at weaning.

The service methods have also changed. Two boars remain present during the process and there are no time pressures for the two stockmen who serve one sow at a time.

The change in site has also allowed Mr Saile to re-design the layout of the farrowing and servicing paddocks to create an efficient 'flow-through' system.

**Colin Stone: 0781 6941223**

## Standardisation for top performance

Achieving the same level of performance across all its units is a major challenge for any business. Dent's is one company that is having a go, by developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for on-farm tasks. At the same time Dent's is providing all staff with training on putting the SOPs into practice.

The first two in-house training meetings were delivered by the BPEX team in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, bringing together staff from Dent's ten breeding units.

The title was "Optimising Reproduction Using Your SOPs" and the aim was to explain fully the reasons behind the guidelines. Many of the sow's reproductive processes were explained; boar contact and reasons for returns were also discussed – all linked to the practical procedures in the SOP and why they help to achieve success.

Throughout the training, quick questions were set to test staff knowledge and everyone had fun using an electronic voting system to record their answers – most of which were correct.

**Angela Cliff: 07967 788484**



Dent Ltd staff taking part in the interactive BPEX workshop

## Earsham Park Farm tour

More than 20 East Anglian pig producers visited Earsham Park Farm near Bungay, Suffolk, to tour Simon Watchorn's outdoor

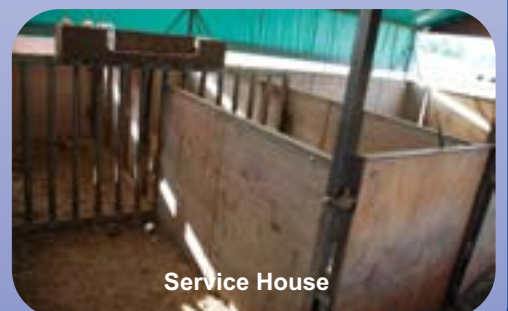
pig unit. The evening event – jointly sponsored by Merial, BPEX and EEPTG – gave farmers the opportunity to look at a different unit and opened up the floor for some informal discussions on best practice.

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Service House

# Pigs can talk!

**Well they can show how they are feeling, if you take a moment to stop and look**

How do you tell whether pigs are in the best condition and happy in their environment? Dutchman Kees Scheepens provides a lot of the answers in his Pig Signals books.

So the BPEX Knowledge Transfer Team jumped at the chance to join Kees Scheepens for a two-day practical training course. It made sure the team's own training is bang up to date, and the knowledge can be used to benefit pig performance on many more farms.

Kees throws practical pig production into a new light, showing how particular pig behaviour, or 'signals', gives stockpeople better understanding of their pigs.

He began with a 'dry swim' through all aspects of pig production, using pictures and video footage to show how to recognise the 'Pig Signals'. The following day the team put the theory to the test looking for those signals on farm. Kees took numerous photos throughout and summed the day up back in office with photos of areas he liked and the signals he spotted on farm.

The Pig Signals books were translated to English for UK pig producers, sponsored by BPEX and Merial Animal Health.

If you are interested in similar training on your unit or as a producer group contact:

**Tess Howe: 07779 321078.**

**"It was an exciting prospect to train ourselves on a new way of problem solving on a unit. Kees gave us some excellent case studies of how he had solved problems – it was invaluable for us and the producer who has already made changes as a result of the visit"**  
**BPEX KT Manager Colin Stone**



BPEX KT Team and Farm staff ready to read the pig signals!

## In Brief

### Intro day

BPEX is pleased to be organising the first Yorkshire Introduction to the Industry day.

The event has been developed to educate those who work alongside the pig industry, by explaining production techniques, cost structures, assurance schemes, impacting legislation and the work of BPEX.

Similar events in other regions have proved a great success. If you're interested in hosting such an event contact:

[Tess.Howe@bpex.org.uk](mailto:Tess.Howe@bpex.org.uk)

### KT Hub

The BPEX KT team has initiated an exciting new project, bringing knowledge transfer teams from across Europe together to form the EU KT Hub.

The first meeting saw six countries meet to share research, practical ideas and knowledge.

In much the same way as producers benefit from pig clubs, it is hoped the EU hub will bring new ideas to the KT team which can be passed on to the levy payers. More information on the hub can be found at:

[www.bpex.org.uk](http://www.bpex.org.uk)

### PIPR

The Pig Industry Professional Register (PIPR) is currently undergoing changes to simplify the scheme. Membership categories will be reduced to two and some of the restrictions on the way in which points are collected will be removed.

The changes are a result of industry feedback.

The NPTC will be contacting existing members shortly, but if you want more detail or would like to join PIPR, please contact:

[Tess.howe@bpex.org.uk](mailto:Tess.howe@bpex.org.uk)

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)