



BIO AWARE – BIO SECURE

healthier pigs and a healthier business



Why should I read this?

This leaflet explains what you can do to prevent your pigs from becoming sick with diseases such as Classical Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease. In particular, you should:

- Review and assess the risk of disease to your pigs with your vet.
- Plan how you will manage outdoor pigs to minimise contact with wild animals and birds.
- Practice good biosecurity.
- Be vigilant and monitor your pigs frequently.
- Plan how you will manage pigs if there is a need to hold them on the unit for a longer period than usual

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Biosecurity is important

Biosecurity means taking steps to ensure good hygiene practices are in place so that the risk of a disease occurring or spreading is minimised. Good biosecurity should be practised at all times, not just during a disease outbreak. Taking the right measures can help protect your pigs, your business, the industry and the community.

What are the benefits?

Good biosecurity:

- helps keep out exotic pig diseases such as Classical Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease;
- reduces the risk of zoonotic diseases such as salmonella
- limits the occurrence and spread of diseases and helps to protect your neighbours, public health and the countryside;
- improves overall herd health; and
- cuts costs of disease treatment; and reduces losses, which could improve farm profitability.

How does disease spread?

People, pigs, pets or wildlife may transport diseases from outside the herd. Mechanical transmission of infection from faeces (main source), urine, saliva, nasal secretions, blood, milk or semen may occur where pigs directly or indirectly come in contact with contaminated clothing, boots, vehicles, equipment, bedding, feed or other materials.

Disease is spread through:

- movement of pigs, people, vehicles and equipment between and within farms;
- the introduction of pigs of low or unknown health status;
- contact with neighbours' herds;
- using shared farm equipment and vehicles, which have not been effectively cleansed and disinfected
- contact with vermin and wild animals or birds
- pigs drinking from contaminated water sources
- pigs eating contaminated feed
- and unsatisfactory cleansing and disinfection of vehicles, sheds, feeding troughs and other equipment.
- air-borne transmission of diseases such as FMD and EP from other units or slurry spreading.

Actions now and planning ahead

Even if you already practice good biosecurity, you are encouraged to take the following steps:

- If you farm outdoor pigs you should plan how you will manage them if there is a need to minimise contact with wild animals or birds.
- Look at the guidance on local risk assessment, available on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk, or by calling the Helpline on **08459 33 55 77**, or from your local Animal Health Divisional Office.
- The risk assessment will help you draw up a plan with your vet for the practical steps you can take to reduce the risk of disease occurring or spreading.
- The plan should include an isolation period for all new stock, and regular sampling procedures for certain diseases, including pneumonias and enteritis.
- Make sure all your records are accurate and up-to-date to ensure that all movements on and off the unit are fully traceable.
- If you have staff, give them the information and training they need to maintain strict standards of hygiene and biosecurity at all times. If they are allowed to keep their own pigs at home, they will need to be extra vigilant for signs of disease and even more careful about biosecurity both at home and on your farm.
- Biosecurity within the farm is also vital, between groups of animals as well as incoming stock. Hypodermic needles etc need to be changed regularly.

Stop disease – keep your farm clean

- **Don't bring infection onto your farm, or spread it around your farm, on your clothes, footwear or hands.** Clean overalls and footwear must be worn when entering pig farms. Protective clothing and footwear should be removed and cleansed and disinfected, laundered or disposed of.
- **Strictly limit and control access to pig herds. If possible the site should be fenced with a controlled entry point.** A perimeter fence will discourage people and animals from entering the unit. Visitors and vehicles should be limited and as far as possible kept away from pig buildings and pastures.
- Provided there has been a complete change of clothing and showering since visitors have been on other pig farms, a 12-hour overnight pig-free break should be adequate for most units.
- On high health sites downtime requirements may be specified and visitors required to shower and to change into clothes provided by the unit. Visitors should sign a book confirming they comply with the unit's requirements.
- On all sites, as a minimum, provide visitors with boots and overalls which you can clean or dispose of afterwards.
- **Have pressure washers, brushes, hoses, water and an approved disinfectant available.** Make sure they are used by visitors to clean vehicles, equipment and boots both before entry and on leaving.
- Feed delivery, carcass collection, animal loading and slurry/manure collection should take place in separate areas at the perimeter so that the people involved do not enter the unit. Feed bins should be located adjacent to perimeter fencing and the farm should provide its own blower pipes, if possible.

- A loading ramp should be available from the last finishing building near the perimeter fence, or pigs should be transported to the road using farm equipment, so that livestock lorries do not enter the unit. Clean and disinfect carcass collection and animal loading areas immediately after use.
- Vehicles, particularly carcass collection lorries, which have visited other units may also carry disease organisms. Vehicles from outside the premises must be cleaned and disinfected before entry to the unit. Ensure washings do not get carried on to or contaminate the unit.
- **Clean and disinfect all vehicles after each journey.** If possible, do not use the same vehicles for transporting pigs, feed, manure or other wastes.
- **Regularly clean and disinfect all crates, containers and other equipment before and after use.** Do not move any equipment into different pig buildings without cleaning and disinfecting it first. This also applies to injecting and dosing equipment.
- **Keep farm access routes, parking areas, yards, areas around buildings and storage areas clean and tidy and well maintained.** This helps avoid wild birds and animals being attracted onto the site and entering buildings and stores.
- Wild animals and birds can carry pig diseases. **Minimise contact between pigs and wild animals or birds.** Prevent accumulation of standing water and remove spilled feed that could attract wild animals or birds. Maintain buildings to ensure that wild birds do not nest or roost in them. Bird screens on all building ventilation inlets and outlets reduce the potential for disease transmission.
- **Keep wild animals and birds, dogs, cats, rodents or other livestock out of pig buildings and feed stores.**

- **Have an active rodent and pest control system in place.** Be vigilant for evidence of vermin. Monitor vermin activity by baiting and trapping.
- The risk of disease introduction through feed and bedding should be reviewed. Try to ensure that feed and bedding material, eg straw, shavings, does not come from sources where it might have been exposed to livestock or their manure.
- **Feed bins, hoppers and feeding equipment must be cleaned and maintained regularly.** Feed silos and containers must be sealed to prevent animals and wild birds contaminating feed.
- **Feed and feed ingredients should only be obtained from a mill or supplier that operates in accordance with the AIC Universal Feed Assurance Scheme: Code of Practice for Merchants.**
- **Supply only clean fresh drinking water to pigs.** Water lines and drinkers must be flushed through and cleaned regularly. In the case of outdoor pigs restrict access to possible sources of standing water used by wild animals and birds.
- **Dead pigs, litter and manure may carry disease.** Dispose of them promptly and properly.
- **If operating a batch system, thoroughly clean the building and all equipment, including ducting, drains and fans at the end of each batch.** Remove all surplus feed, and pig manure. Soak the building with an effective detergent and clean thoroughly. Disinfect the premises and all equipment using the correct concentration and technique. Carry out rodent and other pest control. Cleaning equipment and protective clothing should also be cleansed and disinfected.
- If operating a continuous flow system, thorough cleaning and disinfection should be planned into the production cycle

Buying new stock

Introducing pigs from other sources is one of the main risks for acquiring new infections. The best way to prevent having to deal with a specific disease is never to introduce it to the herd. Incoming stock should not have diseases new to the herd. Ideally incoming stock should be of similar health status to those already on the unit

- Always make sure you know the health status of any pigs you are buying or moving.
- If possible take animals from a single source and avoid mixing animals from multiple sources.
- Make sure the pigs are properly identified and delivered in a clean disinfected truck. Confirm that there have been no recent disease outbreaks on the farm of origin at the time of delivery.
- Incoming stock should be isolated from the rest of the herd – discuss this with your vet and agree a testing and monitoring programme.
- Only place new stock in facilities which you know have been cleansed and disinfected.
- Keep isolation buildings as near as possible to the farm entrance, and separate from other pig buildings.
- Use separate equipment when handling isolated stock. If you have enough staff on your farm, allocate some of them to deal only with isolated stock. If not, make sure you handle isolated stock last. Always wash and change into clean overalls and boots before going back to your main herd buildings.
- Incoming stock should be vaccinated for, or exposed to, diseases of the herd.

Be vigilant!

Look out for signs of disease in your herd.

It is important to keep a close eye on pig health, regularly checking the pigs, identifying areas of concern and investigating the problems. The best pen-side tests available are the observation skills of the people taking care of the pigs. However, a more complete monitoring plan should include further checks:

- Post-mortem examinations of problem pigs;
- Blood samples taken from the group often as part of an ongoing monitoring programme, and
- Slaughter checks of specific groups

The British Pigs Health Scheme uses specialist pig vets to assess a range of health conditions in pig carcasses slaughtered in specialist pig abattoirs throughout Britain. It is a very cost-effective way to find out about the key diseases limiting the effectiveness of production on your farm. See <http://www.bpex.org/bphs/> or ring 01463 233184 for further details.

Increased mortality, scouring and respiratory distress may be early signs of a disease problem.

If you suspect disease, ask your vet for advice as soon as possible. Do not wait for more evidence – some diseases can spread very quickly!

Classical Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease are notifiable diseases. You must tell the Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) at the local Animal Health Divisional Office immediately if you suspect these diseases.

You can find more information about diseases such as Classical Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease, including signs to watch out for, on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk or by calling the Helpline on **08459 33 55 77**.

Taking care of your pigs

The welfare of pigs is of particular concern in the case of disease outbreak. Movement restrictions can have a negative impact, with confinement potentially leading to health and behavioural problems. Having a contingency plan in place will make sure herd welfare remains a priority at a critical time.

It is recommended that a herd health plan be drawn up in consultation and agreement with farm staff and veterinary advisers – this is a requirement on assured units. Health plans should identify the best ways to prevent or treat disease in animals on the unit and to ensure their welfare. It should set clear realistic goals and outline the practical strategies to achieve these goals, including any changes in farm practice.

Ideally those working with the pigs should be directly involved in developing the health plan. Health plans are only likely to be effective if all staff agree the targets and strategies are practical and sensible. Protocols and procedures should be developed that make it easier to follow the plan than not to do so. The plan must be put into practice, reviewed regularly and updated in the light of experience and progress.

It is important that people working with animals can recognise health problems. Staff working with animals need to be skilled in stockmanship, in assessing animal welfare and in the administration and safe use of veterinary medicines. Training should be provided where required. Staff should be encouraged to gain the appropriate NPTC certificates of competence (www.nptc.org.uk).

Copies of relevant regulations, Codes of Practice and training materials should be available on every unit. The Pig Enterprise interactive CD-ROM based multimedia training packages are available free of charge from the British Pig Executive (www.bpex.org; www.stotfoldpigs.co.uk).

For guidance and information on pig welfare, call the Helpline on **08459 33 55 77**.

Protect your herd! Protect your industry!

Always practice good biosecurity, ask your vet for advice if you suspect disease and report any suspicions of Classical Swine Fever or Foot and Mouth Disease to your Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) at the local Animal Health Divisional Office without delay.

For more information on biosecurity and pig diseases, visit the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk or call the Helpline on **08459 33 55 77**.

There is also information on the following sites:

National Assembly for Wales – www.countryside.wales.gov.uk

Scottish Executive – www.scottishexecutive.gov.uk

National Pig Association – www.npa-uk.net Tel: 02476 858782

British Pig Executive – www.bpex.org Tel: 01908 844368

British Pig Association - www.britishpigs.org.uk. Tel: 01223 845100