

Facing the current industry challenges together

COMMENT



Duncan Berkshire,

is one of the lead vets within the five-vet pig team at Bishopston Veterinary Group, based in Yorkshire

► **All within our sector were hoping the New Year would bring the vision of a clearer way forwards – a few weeks in and I'm not sure any of us are seeing it, either close by or on the horizon...**

There are pressures all around and it is easy to end up feeling as if the odds are stacked against us – but this is far from the truth. The pig sector is supportive and there will always be someone out there ready and willing to help.

From a veterinary perspective, it is common for people to reach out to us when there are health issues with their pigs, such as a flare of meningitis cases or an increase in coughing, both of which have been common so far this winter.

This is understandable and sensible in order to help get on top of the issues and to help return the pigs to good health and productivity. It's what we train for as vets.

Another area getting significant airtime is the potential welfare issues on farms as we face the current pig flow difficulties together. No-one could have foreseen the challenges that have hit every producer.

It's all well and good having a contingency plan, as required by APHA and Red Tractor, but once we get many weeks into these issues, no-one has much 'spare' capacity.

Making sure you are talking with other producers, your vet, your advisors and industry bodies is so important to make sure we don't end up too insular with our thought processes – you will not be alone in tackling these challenges.

Juggling the flow of extra pigs on farm does create some potential issues. Health issues often jump out since they can be more obvious in the short term, but there is also an impact on things like feed provision, water demands, ventilation, bedding

use – the list goes on...

That's why it's important to talk to others. Your vet has the benefit of seeing many other farms, so may have options or ideas for these other areas of pig production.

Keeping the communication channels open to other producers can mean that you hear of other options more quickly, too. Always making sure your channels for selling your pigs are fully informed of where you stand will also, hopefully, make sure the right pigs move at the right time.

Finally, keeping the likes of NPA and AHDB Pork on your radar will not only allow you to hear what is coming further down the line more promptly, but the two-way feeding of information from those on farm also allows a stronger case to be made to try and get things improved.

This is the time to reach out and make sure the information flows...

"It's all well and good having a contingency plan, but once we get weeks into these issues, no-one has much 'spare' capacity"

COMMENT



Dominic Charman

Is an independent pig industry consultant. In his previous role, he was technical manager at AHDB Pork

The future of data analysis is here

► **Working as a consultant in the pig industry is always interesting, often challenging and frequently great fun.**

The challenges vary greatly: from those who wish to build off-the-wall and novel systems, to simpler aims, like getting the most out of a farrowing house team. One of the challenges I often meet is around data.

Many of you will have read the multiple and, no doubt on occasion, tedious articles that I and others have written on data, data quality, business intelligence and so on. However, I have noticed an increase in the amount of data available on farm, so I am chalking that one up as a win.

Once your consultant, vet, nutritionist or any other advisor or, indeed the, unit manager, production manager, owner or other internal stakeholder, have that large volume of data, the first question is whether it is accurate and quality data.

Secondly, what do we compare it to? Often a unit or multi-site business will have its own targets, set by owners or managers in concert with their vet or other advisor.

Dashboarding is the new buzzword. While looking at pictures of numbers is easier for a quick sense of what's occurring, a good dashboard needs a benchmark.

Most pig recording systems allow for the setting of targets and many feature dashboarding solutions, but one has come up with the current Holy Grail of benchmarking – multi-site reporting is a new solution from herd recording software specialist AgroVision.

It's important to point out I comment on this as an independent specialist, recommending or providing solutions to producers without margin or commission – indeed, in this case, having parted with a large sum of money in order to have access to this new platform.

Effectively, multi-site reporting allows consultants, vets, feed providers, nutritionists or those running their own multi-site businesses to benchmark between units in real time utilising live data.

This enables a real time benchmark within businesses, across multiple businesses, and prospectively across comparable units within the national herd in the future. It's all done under the control of the producer but with the option of sharing with and being guided by their advisors. For example, a multi-site producer could benchmark across their units and against a national benchmark.

A consultant with access to the system could benchmark across their customers (of a similar size/type of production system) and use these figures to set targets for clients.

This is the future of data analysis – target setting and performance monitoring (for the pig industry) is here!

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