



## FACT SHEET

### HEALTH MONITORING

It is important to know what diseases are present in your herd, to track these diseases and how they impact welfare, productivity, profitability and the marketability of your pigs. To monitor herd health, pigs must be checked at least once daily but could be checked more frequently for signs of ill-health and/or injury. Any sick or injured pigs that require treatment should be recorded on a Treatment Record. Pigs that are found dead or are euthanased should also be recorded. Recording diseases, treatments and deaths in this way is important as it:

- Allows you to monitor disease trends – to know if they are staying the same, improving or getting worse;
- Proves that you are diligent in treating pigs where required – in other words – addressing basic welfare needs;
- Gives an indication of how serious the problem is – and how much it is costing you; and
- Provides an indication on whether the problem is getting out of hand – requiring veterinary and/or management intervention.

#### Hospital pens

Where pigs are judged as being not able to compete with their pen-mates, they should be transferred to a hospital pen and given special treatment. Characteristics of pigs that indicate they are not competitive include:

- Losing body condition (Body Condition Score 2 or less);
- Unable to self-feed or drink; and
- Behavioural changes – shivering, huddling in a corner, being bullied by pen-mates.

Hospital pens should have some special design considerations to optimise the chances of pigs recovering. These include:

- Have sufficient space to avoid aggressive contact with other pigs – this may require a lower stocking density than normal pens or separate accommodation;
- Be provided with a dry and comfortable environment; ideally containing bedding material;
- Be draft-free and provide the correct thermal environment for the age/size of the pig. Weaner pigs (four to ten weeks of age) require a temperature of 28-22°C;

- Be penned with pigs of similar size, provided their physical condition is not compromised by a shared penning arrangement;
- Be able to reach water and feed readily;
- Be provided with food which meets their needs for recovery - a higher quality feed may be considered e.g. weaner diet for grower pigs/liquid diet for weaners;
- Be located in pens that enable easy provision of food or water medication, or individual treatment, should these be needed; and
- Have a floor which has enough solid area for all pigs to lay comfortably. Preferably, this floor should be non-abrasive (e.g. black rubber matting or compacted clay).

Hospital pens should be located in areas of the piggery that can be easily and frequently monitored. Pigs in hospital pens should be inspected at least twice daily or as often as is necessary to deal with deteriorating health. Pigs in hospital pens should be moved to the next stage in the production system when their age group is moved.

Pigs should be treated according to veterinary advice.

Individually identify sick pens so that their recovery can be monitored. Pigs that do not respond to treatment and are not likely to recover will need to be euthanased in a timely and appropriate manner. Criteria for euthanasia of pigs include:

- Severe pain (screaming when attempting to move it);
- Emaciation/debilitation caused by chronic disease (Body Condition Score <2 and not improving after three days treatment);
- Has not responded positively to pain-relieving medications after 24 hours;
- Pig is not able to drink or eat unassisted; and
- Is not economically-sound to treat the pig.

Records must be kept of treatments and actions taken to manage sick pigs, including the reason for treatment, the treatment and the Withholding Period (WHP).

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