

Welcome to Pigs N' Mud

Welcome to the first edition of Pigs N' Mud, Australian Pork Limited's (APL) newsletter for the free range and small producer. It will be published every quarter with themes for each season – summer, autumn, winter and spring.

This Summer 2015 edition includes:

- An article by Dr Pat Mitchell about water checks during the hot weather
- A story piece by Belle Marriage, owner of Tillari Trotters Free Range in south west Queensland.

We encourage all producers to share their pig farming stories with us by contacting Pigs N' Mud.

In 2015, the first four editions of Pigs N' Mud will be provided to APL members and non-members.

We hope you enjoy reading the first edition and look forward to hearing your feedback.

For more information about Pigs N' Mud and APL Membership, call Maree Winmill on 02 6270 8832 or visit the APL website at www.australianpork.com.au/members. ●

Producer Yarn

Summer lovin'

Belinda "Belle" Marriage and husband Tim are owners of Tillari Trotters Free Range. Their 35 sow, rare Tamworth breed pig farm is located in Karana, south west Queensland, about 55km from Warwick and 100 km from Toowoomba. They are APL Members and their farm is APIQ[✓] Certified Free Range.

Belle says... "I'm committed to the welfare, happiness and well-being of the pigs. I produce and market genuine 100 per cent free range, humanely raised pork, fresh from my farm."

"We run both stud registered Tamworth and Duroc pigs. I do not feed antibiotics, chemical or genetically modified feeds to my pigs nor do I clip the pig's teeth or dock their tails."

Do you encounter any issues in summer during hot weather?

"During the hot weather, feeding changes to early in the morning or late at night. It's not unusual for me to be out feeding and checking water at 3am in the morning. The watering system works on gravity and a nipple system. Wallows always have to be full."



So how do you manage the issues with hot weather?

"I make big ice bricks (Length 70cm x Width 30cm x Depth 5cm) from the freezer to cool the pigs down when they're going to farrow. The ice bricks melt which in turn cools their farrowing huts and gives them cool damp soil without creating mud in their huts. At times we also use cool wet towels on the farrowing sows."

How did you get into pork production?

"I wanted to be able to eat ethically raised meat and being a registered nurse by trade, I particularly wanted meat free from chemicals and antibiotics. My grandparents were traditional pig farmers."

Do you market pigs weekly?

"I sell directly to customers through farmers markets, to butchers and on the open markets."

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What do you feed your pigs?

"I purchase 10 tonne of grain feed a month which comes on a truck from Warwick. We are conscious of what we feed the pigs as this can affect the smell of their manure. Consequently we have no sorghum put in our feed and do not feed milk to our pigs. We also feed lucerne hay and sprouted fodder."



Do you have any staff?

"No, we are a husband and wife team."

What's your favourite thing about producing pigs?

"Seeing them run around and know that we are helping to keep this wonderful breed of pig from extinction."

What's one of your biggest challenges?

"Farming is hard, but one of the biggest challenges for me is being young, female smaller producer who has to complete with larger operations."

For more information about Belle and Tim Marriage and Tillari Trotters 100 per cent genuine APIQ[✓] Certified free range (rare breed) pork, visit their website at www.tamworthpigs.com.au. ●



Hot weather = water checks

Water is essential in hot weather. Pigs, like many other animals including man, will survive much longer without food than without water. Water is especially critical during the summer as requirements will increase markedly.

Poor water supply can lead to:

- Slower growth rate of pigs
- More urinary infections in sows
- Lower feed intake in lactating sows, leading to a loss in body condition.

If pigs are deprived of water altogether (e.g. if water supply is turned off by accident), they will die within a few days, sooner in hotter weather. The first signs of water deprivation (so-called 'salt poisoning') are thirst and constipation, followed by convulsions. Affected animals may wander aimlessly and appear to be blind and deaf.



Water troughs or watering points should be located away from the shelter, so that the bedding stays dry. Pigs will only devote a certain amount of time and effort towards obtaining their daily water requirements. Too many pigs per trough, and bad positioning, can cause reduced water intake.

Piggery water usage is usually roughly calculated at about 150 litres/sow/day (this includes wallows), to take into account all the water a sow and her offspring will require to keep them going. Pigs do tend to like to drink deep and long which is why many farmers provide water troughs, second hand laundry troughs, old baths or shower bases as they make ideal watering points for your pigs. If you use the "bulk" delivery of water, the troughs, etc must be heavy or well staked into the ground as pigs make short work of loose fittings and light materials.

On the other hand, in this country of ours where water tends to be at a premium and in short supply in many places, many producers are using nipple drinkers or smaller bowl troughs to try and stop the wastage of water from troughs. If you do use nipple drinkers or bowl troughs, it's a good idea to provide at least two per group, even if there are only a few pigs. The same rule also applies to troughs; it's a good idea to have more than one watering point as some pigs will literally "hog" it, and drive others away.



Pigs love getting either into troughs or getting their noses in and splashing around in the hotter weather, even if they have a perfectly good wallow to snooze in and keep cool. The only way to stop that happening is to have a trough with a few dividers, which allows them to get their noses in and have a good long drink, but doesn't let them climb in the trough.

If you place large troughs in paddocks where sows and piglets will have access to the trough, it's a good idea to put bricks or a lump of smooth concrete in the trough, so that if any piglets fall in or are knocked in by accident, they are able to get out.

It's also important to clean the troughs out regularly, as they will get a build-up of dirt and other contaminants. Pigs are pretty much like us when it comes to food and water likes and dislikes and they can be fussy about what goes into their mouths. If they don't like the taste, they won't drink or eat it, so the best way of keeping them drinking is to make sure their water troughs are clean. If you can pipe the water to the trough, it will definitely save you a job, but if you can't, it pays to have a hose that will reach the trough and let you fill it easily and clean it easily.

Just make sure the hose isn't left within reach of the pigs when you've finished, because that will be the finish of the hose! Also the rough estimate of 150 litres/sow/day doesn't account for water required for wallows. The amount of water required for wallows can vary greatly according to environmental temperature and soil type. The upkeep of wallows is very important, as wallows may provide the best form of cooling and sunscreen for outdoor pigs.

Water temperature

In summer, water temperature in exposed pipes can become too hot for pigs to drink. Cool drinking water increases the consumption in hot weather and assists the pig to lose heat. Increased water consumption increases feed intake and growth rates. Ideally, keep the water temperature below 20°C throughout the year.

Here are some handy tips:

- Check that the water supply pipes are not exposed to direct sunlight. Don't use polypipe above the ground and either insulate delivery lines or bury them 600 mm deep
- Where water is drawn from a dam, place the inlets at least 2 m below the water surface
- If possible have a small shelter over the watering point, to keep it out of direct sunlight.

Feeding lactating sows in summer

Voluntary feed intake during lactation is often affected by the higher temperatures during summer months, which not only reduces feed intake but also has a direct effect on milk production. Poor feed intake during lactation can cause excessive body weight loss, especially in younger sows, causing a poor onset of hormone activity after weaning. All attempts should be made to improve voluntary feed intake during lactation, particularly during summer months.

This can be done by:

- Making sure water supply is what it should be, i.e. not hot, flowing well and tasting good
- Feed small amounts frequently to keep feed fresh
- Feed early morning and late at night (or make sure her self-feeder has food at those times) because that's when she will be the hungriest.

For more information about water supply for your pigs, contact Dr Pat Mitchell on 0402 794 912 or email pat.mitchell@australianpork.com.au. ●



Standing out from the crowd

Can you spot the difference?



You got it! One of them has a star in the top corner. But that's the only difference right. Or is it?

That's the kind of decision making that consumers face every time they go grocery shopping. But how do they know what they are getting is what they've paid for? After all, many shoppers have been disappointed to learn that products they were prepared to pay more for, due to the claims on the label, didn't quite stack up when put to the test. So how do we make our product stand out while at the same time build consumer trust? Well, that's just one of the topics we'll investigate through Pigs N' Mud over the coming year as we bring you articles and stories from your fellow producers.

Since this is the first edition of Pigs N' Mud, we'd like to start by mentioning APIQ[✓] – the industry's own Quality Assurance program. APIQ[✓] is recognised around Australia by retailers and is a great way to stand out from the crowd. Producers of any size can be certified as APIQ[✓], APIQ[✓] Free Range (FR) or APIQ[✓] Outdoor Bred (OB).

Where a producer is APIQ[✓] FR or OB Certified and they use the APIQ[✓] FR or OB logos, consumers can be assured that the product they're buying is indeed Free Range or Outdoor Bred.

Incidentally, approximately 10 per cent of all commercially managed sows in Australia are APIQ[✓] FR or OB Certified, and 92 per cent of all production is APIQ[✓] Certified. Best yet, APIQ[✓] FR or OB Certified producers can use the APIQ[✓] FR or OB logos on their product free of charge.

So whether you're looking to grow your business, manage risk, increase your market opportunities or just differentiate yourself from your competitors, APIQ[✓] can help you get there. If you think APIQ[✓] can help you stand out from the crowd and you'd like to know more, give Tony Abel or Steve Miller a call on 1800 789 099. ●

PigPass know how

PigPass is a system for keeping track of Australia's pig farms and pig herd. It captures information about farms, saleyards, abattoirs and movement of pigs. Even hobby farmers and pet pig owners need to use PigPass. There are currently over 2,300 registered properties in the system and nearly 1,000 of these properties have 10 pigs or less.

PigPass is important because it helps manage disease outbreaks and food safety incidents. In the event of a disease outbreak, the information recorded in PigPass will help to control it. It is important that smallholders use PigPass too. Your pigs face the same exotic disease threats as pigs in larger farms.

When you send pigs to another property, you fill out a PigPass NVD form. Recipients of these forms confirm arrivals of pigs onto their property. Most abattoirs demand a PigPass NVD when accepting stock for slaughter. Movements are reported using the PigPass website. You will need to have a copy handy of the PigPass NVD that arrived with the pig(s). Log on and follow the instructions by clicking the "P2P movement". If you need assistance then please call the helpdesk on 1800 001 458 or email helpdesk@pigpass.com.au. ●

We'd love to hear from you

To go in the running to feature as a piggery in the next edition of Pigs N' Mud, or to simply get in touch with us, contact Maree Winmill, APL Events and Membership Officer on 02 6270 8832 or email maree.winmill@australianpork.com.au. ●