



Pigs N' Mud

Australian Pork Limited's Newsletter

Issue 3 | Winter 2015

Welcome to Pigs N' Mud

Welcome to the Winter edition of Pigs N' Mud, Australian Pork Limited's (APL) newsletter for the small producer.

This Winter 2015 edition includes:

- Articles featuring Tammi and Stuart Jonas of Jonai Farms and Christine Ross of Eastwind Rare Breeds
- An information piece from Bendigo veterinarian, Trish Holyoake, titled, "Keeping Your Pigs Healthy"
- "Winter Tips for Outdoor Production" from pig industry consultant, Graeme Pope; and
- Some important information from APL Manager Environment and Climate Change, Janine Price about obtaining early expert advice with regard to pig farming and planning requirements.

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

Retraction

We would like to bring to your attention a mistake that was made in the Autumn Edition of Pigs N' Mud. We wrote that Melanda Park was "100 per cent genuine APIQ[®] Certified free range pork," however this is not the case.

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. ●



The Jonas Family from Jonai Farms and Meatsmiths in Victoria.

All of the butchering is done on the farm in the boning room which was crowdfunded in 2013. A range of artisanal, nitrite-free smallgoods are produced on-site. The farm has also recently been approved to produce air cured meats such as jamon, coppa, and pancetta, as well as bone stocks and products like pâté de tête. It is anticipated the production of air cured meats will transform the farm into a truly no-waste nose-to-tail operation. Jonai Farms and Meatsmiths pride themselves in producing "uncommonly delicious ethical pork and beef" available at the farm gate and online, with deliveries to hubs in Melbourne and throughout the Victorian central highlands region.

Tammi believes, "Jonai Farms is something of a rarity at having achieved an ethically viable no-growth model solely reliant on farm income, all within just two years of setting up. Supply chain control, direct sales, and monthly butchery, sausage-making and curing workshops are all integral to the model."

Do you encounter any issues in winter with the cooler weather coming in?

"Only newborn piglets are really susceptible to the cold – the older pigs revel in the cooler months. So during farrowing we ensure the houses are on dry ground and have plenty of dry, deep litter for nesting, which helps protect piglets from squashing as well as keeping them warm."

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Producer Yarn

Jonai Farms and Meatsmiths

Tammi and Stuart Jonas raise pastured rare-breed Large Black pigs and Lowline and Murray Grey cattle on 69 acres of volcanic paddocks just outside Daylesford, Victoria. They are really a micro farm - just 12 sows and two boars and 12-18 cattle at any time and process an average of 16 pigs and one steer per month.



How did you get into pork production?

"We grew tired of choosing between savouring and saving the world, so came to the land to be regenerative, ethical farmers of pastured pigs."

Do you have any staff?

"We have a school-based farm apprentice Will, and one staff member in the boning room (my head meat girl, Jass), as well as two volunteer residents who live with us for three months at a time to learn our entire system, currently the lovely Andrew and Theresa, who are hoping to set up their own butcher shop with a range of charcuterie in Gippsland."

Do you market pigs weekly?

"We run a fortnightly schedule, processing an average of eight pigs and a side of beef each fortnight, and selling through the farm gate and deliveries in our region and into Melbourne."

What do you feed your pigs?

"Our pigs are fed a diet mostly of beer porridge – spent brewers' grain from the local Holgate Brewhouse mixed with milk from Jonesy's Dairy. That's supplemented by what they eat from the paddocks, which we're working to diversify to include not just the rye paddocks we inherited, but also brassicas, turnips, sweetbeets, sunflowers, barley, lupins and millet. They also still receive a small ration of pelletised grains – wheat, barley and lupins. We're seeking to minimise the need to bring any purpose-grown animal feed onto the property."



Jonai Farms and Meatsmiths outdoor housing.

What's your favourite thing about producing pigs?

"Raising animals out on the paddocks is intensely gratifying. We get to work in a beautiful place with lovely animals, and I happen to love the butchery side of the business for its creativity and our capacity to deliver an ethical, quality product to people who care about how the animals they eat are being raised."

Is there anything else you would like to share about your operation with our readers?

"We've had veterinary science students come to us who have been told that pigs can't farrow outdoors, that you have to clip their teeth and dock their tails or they'll chew them off each other, and that pigs can't tolerate cold. None of these things are true and ours and the many other free-range pig farms across the world are a testament to the truth that animals can and should be raised in ways that enable them to express their natural behaviours. Pigs can only build houses in fairy tales!"

For more information about Jonai Farms and Meatsmiths, visit their website at www.jonaifarms.com.au.



Producer Yarn continued....

Eastwind Rare Breeds farms with a passion for genetic purity

Eastwind Rare Breeds Farm is situated in Macclesfield, a rural hamlet on the edge of the Yarra Valley, close to the Dandenong Ranges. Owner, Christine Ross says, "It's a most beautiful part of the world with rainfall of 50 inches in a normal year." Although not certified organic, Christine has always farmed without pesticides, artificial fertilisers or chemicals. Her pigs graze on lush improved pastures that receive only the manure from the animals and soil aeration and the pastures have improved greatly using these methods over the past 25 years. Highland cattle and Wiltshire horn sheep rotationally graze to help remove the parasite burden. Pork products are marketed under the banner of Yarra Valley Free Range Pork.

Native animals and birds live on the farm, expanding a wildlife corridor and improvement in habitat for the endangered Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater possum along the property's creek line.

Do you encounter any issues in winter with the cold weather and any preparation you may do for spring and how do you manage these issues?

"If there is a prolonged spell of rainy weather, I keep some of the pigs inside stables for a week or two to reduce pugging but other than that my pigs sleep in small huts in their paddocks on straw. Being of British origins the Large Black copes well with the cold and is a very adaptable breed. I sometimes harrow the paddocks during this time to even out the lumps and bumps."



Christine Ross of Eastwind Rare Breeds in Victoria.

How did you get into pork production?

"I collected all known registered Large Blacks in 1990 to try to help save this very old breed that was in danger of dying out in Australia but soon realised I was unable to keep all of them nor was I able to sell them all as stud animals. I started by feeding my family and friends and then gradually found markets with restaurants. This was not a long term solution due to the propensity of chefs to change their suppliers in line with the fashion of the day. This meant being unable to rely upon regular long term sales. The Slow Food movement saved my bacon (pun intended) as these 'foodies' put me in touch with a variety of contacts where I received favourable media publicity for the breed and, with the development of the farmers market movement I was able to find the outlet I required. I also provide a butcher in Camberwell."

What do you feed your pigs?

"As well as grazing I have a custom mix made up consisting of barley, peas, lupins and essentials like salt, calcium and lysine."

What's your favourite thing about producing pigs?

"I am very proud of the fact that I produce pedigreed stud animals. It takes me back many years to when I saw dedicated stud breeders at the Melbourne Show with the wonderful variety of what are now known as heritage breeds. These were small operators who knew all about their bloodlines and took great pride in showcasing the best they had. Every litter fills me with hope for the future."

Is there anything else you would like to share about your operation with our readers?

"The Large Black and other heritage breeds are in grave danger of dying out due to fewer breeders keeping them pure. Many herds now contain the genetics of other breeds or of unknown pigs that have been allowed into the herdbook via an 'appendix' system. This will ultimately lead to the homogenisation of taste and other attributes for which the Large Black has become known. I hope that at some time in the future it will be possible to import genetics from the UK. I wish a few more breeders would take them on and begin a conservation breeding program."

For more information about Eastwind Farm and Yarra Valley Free Range Pork, visit their website at www.largeblackpigs.com.au.



Some Winter Tips for Outdoor Pig Production

Cold, wet and windy weather can test the resolve of both pigs and people! Your attention to a few winter tips can help your pigs maintain their productivity throughout the colder months.

Welfare

Place farrowing huts and all moveable pig shelters with their backs against the local prevailing weather, to help reduce draughts.

Patch/replace tarps used to cover feed and bedding stores, to avoid rainwater penetrating deep into straw bales, creating mould growth. Save your best quality barley straw for use in farrowing huts and weaners. Increase bedding depth once litters are past three days of age, to reduce overlays caused by newborn piglets getting tangled in excess bedding.

Consider replacing damaged pig shelter roofs using insulated building materials.

Fit tarps to vehicles transporting pigs to reduce wind chill.

Nutrition

Check self-feeders are positioned to enable pig access from all sides, without being partly submerged in water or deep mud. Fit weatherproof lids to feeders/silos; consider using feeders fitted with lift-up flaps/covers, to protect feed from water damage.

Cold pigs of all ages will want to eat more during winter than in summer, especially lactating sows. Check back through past slaughter records to see if increased fat penalties were applied to pigs grown through winter. Discuss with your nutritionist the potential value of re-formulating your winter-fed diets, or adding an extra finisher/pre-sale diet to your range of grower feeds to address any carcass quality concerns.

Consider adding a mycotoxin binder to your diets to cover the increased risk of pigs encountering mouldy feed/bedding.

Health

Check the timing of whole breeder herd vaccinations; twice/yearly boosters for Parvovirus, Leptospirosis and Erysipelas will usually fall due in winter. Talk with your vet about the need to vaccinate pigs at weaning against Erysipelas if you usually experience clinical outbreaks in grower pigs during July-September.

Pigs will huddle together more during cold months, providing greater opportunity for Mange to spread from sows to progeny; check your prevention program is up to date.

Rodents and feral cats are more attracted to camp indoors in sheds, workshops and bedding stores. Their urine and faeces may harbour/spread diseases including Leptospirosis, Swine Dysentery, Erysipelas and Toxoplasmosis. Cats can also kill and remove young piglets from farrowing huts. Pest populations are best assessed for number/distribution at nights. Rotate the type/location of baits used to maintain their interest in being taken.

Ask your vet to arrange for a slaughter monitoring check to be conducted in late spring on pigs grown-out during winter, to assess how your pigs coped with your winter pig health management program.



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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.



Planning Issues on the Rise

Planning issues seem to be on the increase. Australian Pork Limited (APL) regularly receives enquiries from producers, planners, regulators and the community on a whole range of issues associated with pig farming and planning requirements. Enquiries range from producers seeking information on their requirements, councils requiring information on best management practice and the community asking questions about often perceived issues. Some of these issues can be resolved quite quickly but in the majority of cases, numerous steps need to be taken to increase the knowledge and confidence of those involved in the decision making process.

APL has some great information to assist producers and decision makers in the planning process. This information can also be given to the community to identify our risks and demonstrate how we mitigate them. Our National Environmental Guidelines, Electronic Management plan templates and Gas Safety Management Plan template, research reports and factsheets are examples of some of the available information.

APL encourages all pork producers to get in touch with APL early in the planning process. Once a process has begun, information exchanged and heels dug in, it is very difficult to recover or avoid a protracted process.

APL can provide advice on planning requirements and direct you to information that may assist with your applications.

For advice and assistance with environment and planning issues please contact:

Janine Price
APL Manager, Environment & Climate Change
Research and Innovation
Phone 02 6270 8827
Email janine.price@australianpork.com.au.

Check out APL's Outdoor Production Resources

National Environmental Guidelines for Rotational Outdoor Piggeries

The National Environmental Guidelines for Rotational Outdoor Piggeries provide prospective and existing operators of Free Range (FR) and Outdoor Bred (OB) systems with information to size, site, design and manage rotational outdoor piggeries in a way that is sustainable and protects the community amenity and natural resources of an area.

The guidelines encapsulates a national approach to environmental management for rotational outdoor piggeries and incorporates up to date best practise and science as well as complementing the industry's quality assurance program APIQ[✓] FR and APIQ[✓] OB.

It covers issues such as site selection, planning requirements, separation and buffer distances, pig accommodation and paddock facilities, nutrient budgeting, promoting more even distribution of manure nutrients, land and water protection measures, mortalities management, environmental risk assessment, monitoring and assessment of sustainability and nutrient management plans.

The guidelines provide a general framework for environmental management and can be used by decision makers and producers to address individual site requirements.

The electronic version of the guideline is available at <http://environmentalguidelines.realviewdigital.com>.

You can also obtain a hard copy of the publication by contacting APL.

The APL Factsheet for Design and Management of Outdoor Free Range Areas for Pigs can be found here: <http://australianpork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/FACT-SHEET-Design-Management-of-Outdoor-FR-Areas-for-Pigs.pdf>.



Keeping Your Pigs Healthy

Whilst there are many diseases that pigs can get, most are preventable by having good biosecurity, vaccination and/or by minimising stress. This is called a “Herd Health Plan” and all pig owners should have one.

The first step to writing your health plan is to determine how you will keep diseases out (your biosecurity plan). This may be as simple as only buying pigs from the same supplier (never from saleyards), putting new pigs in quarantine (ideally for at least six weeks) and controlling people movements. Never let visitors on to your farm in their street clothes – provide them with overalls and invest in some rubber boots. Keep a separate pair of boots for when you take pigs to the abattoir or saleyards and never wear these on-farm. Have a perimeter fence around your farm to keep feral pigs out.

The second part of your health plan is to control the diseases that you have. Pigs carry bacteria and viruses that can cause disease if they are not vaccinated or if they get stressed. Talk with your veterinarian about pig vaccinations. Most vets recommend vaccinating breeding stock against erysipelas, leptospirosis and porcine parvovirus. In some cases, you may need to vaccinate against respiratory disease and circovirus. Stressful situations that may result in disease include transporting, mixing pigs, cold weather (particularly if pigs are housed on their own) and poor quality feed.

The final part of your herd health plan is to consider what medications you should have on-hand to treat sick pigs. Most of these will be Schedule 4 (vet-only) drugs, and can only be prescribed by a vet who has recently visited your pigs and is familiar with the diseases that are present. It is a good idea to get a vet to visit your farm during the early stages of pig ownership so they can advise you on how to prevent and control the common pig diseases. The vet can then provide you with the necessary medications (usually an antibiotic and an anti-inflammatory) to treat any sick or injured animals in emergency situations. Your vet can also give you training on how to administer these treatments to sick animals and how to store the drugs correctly. As many pigs are destined to be eaten, it is important that you are aware of your legal obligations regarding medication use, particularly the importance of giving the right dose and adhering to medication withholding periods.

A generic Herd Health Program Checklist can be found at: <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/livestock/pigs/pig-health-and-welfare/herd-health-program-checklist>.

Dr Trish Holyoake is a veterinarian based in Bendigo with over 27 years of experience working with pigs.



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Everyone with Pigs needs a Vet

Anyone who owns and/or cares for pigs should have a veterinarian they can call on to help them manage the health of their animals. Veterinarians are able to provide advice and medicines for the prevention and treatment of disease on farm.

Although disease may not always be obvious, “subclinical” disease can often be expensive as pigs grow slower, have poorer feed conversion efficiency and reduced carcass value compared to healthy pigs. There are also some legal reasons for having a veterinarian visit your farm:

- The Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals (Pigs) now has a requirement that all farms have a “Herd Health Program” designed in collaboration with a veterinarian to ensure disease does not impact on the welfare of animals
- It is a requirement of the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program (APIQ[✓]) that farms seeking accreditation have a Herd Health Program developed in collaboration with their veterinarian
- It is a legal requirement for a veterinarian to have a bone fide veterinarian-client relationship before they can prescribe, authorise and dispense/supply Schedule 4 medications.

Further information on this can be found in the Australian Veterinary Association Guidelines for Prescribing, Authorising and Dispensing Veterinary Medicines (2005), found at: http://www.ava.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/Other/Guidelines_for_prescribing_authorising_and_dispensing_veterinary_medicines.pdf. The APL Factsheet “Everyone with Pigs Needs a Vet” can be accessed here: http://australianpork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FACT-SHEET-Sectn I - Vet-client-relationship_APL-Final_Jan-2012.pdf. ●