

TALKSHOP MAY 2020

Firstly we hope that you, your staff and colleagues and everyone's families remain in good health through this unusual time. We have seen a number of you over the last few weeks as we have adapted our working practices, in line with the ever-evolving Government guidance, and increased the number of routine visits that we are carrying out. We hope to see more of you over the coming weeks.

We continue to review how we carry out visits to ensure that we maintain appropriate social distancing whenever possible and wear necessary additional PPE when carrying out tasks for which maintaining a 2 metre distance is not possible. This does mean that we will be conducting as much of each visit in the open air as we can, including completing any paperwork. So, for the time being sadly we can't pop in for a cuppa.

These measures are for the protection of everyone involved in the visit so we would ask that you help us out by ensuring that:

- You inform us in advance of the visit if anyone on the farm is self isolating, shielding or has symptoms that could be associated with Covid-19
- any paperwork we need to review is easily accessible to us
- you have a pen handy to sign any forms
- staff members taking part in the visit are kept to a minimum
- all those involved in the visit maintain a 2 metre social distance throughout
- consider enhanced PPE for staff involved in procedures where social distancing is not possible i.e. restraint during vasectomy surgery, collection of blood samples, restraint for euthanasia

Please don't be offended if we whip out a face mask and a visor, these measures are to protect everyone, and we take your health and safety as well as ours very seriously.

In other news, the sun has been out! For what feels like weeks on end. The long, wet winter which felt like it would never end is now a distant memory as fields have turned to concrete and pigs are getting hot.

Pigs lose heat by:

- Convection – therefore good ventilation is essential for efficient heat loss into the air
- Evaporation – pigs cannot sweat therefore access to liquid in which to wallow is necessary for heat loss
- Conduction – pigs will modify their lying posture to lose heat into a solid surface
- Radiation – if the temperature difference between the pigs body and surrounding surfaces is insufficient then heat loss does not occur. Maintaining building or arc insulation and painting external surfaces white maintains a wider temperature differential and facilitates heat loss by radiation.

If pigs experience heat stress productivity suffers in all ages. Fertility deteriorates with reduced conception rates and therefore increased returns. Boars may have a drop in sperm production which can manifest 8 weeks or more after the period of hot weather. In the feeding herd heat stress can present as an increase in vice issues and deterioration in growth rate.

If water availability is compromised then pigs can experience salt poisoning which presents with similar signs to meningitis or Glasser's.

For all pigs extreme heat stress can result in death due to their innate inability to sweat or pant.

It is important to ensure that measures are in place to minimise heat stress and the detrimental effect that this will have on all ages of pigs.

Outdoors

- provision of wallows and/or shaded areas
- painting dry sow and farrowing arcs white to reflect heat
- check water points to ensure that adequate, clean drinking water is always available
- feeding at cooler times of day when pigs are more likely to want to eat so intakes are maintained
- review semen handling in the field so AI isn't heat shocked and fertility impaired

Indoors

- check ventilation systems are functioning properly, and alarms are working
- reduce slurry levels and remove soiled bedding frequently to limit heat release from manure and manage fly populations
- check stocking densities are correct or consider reducing stocking rates during hot weathers periods
- repair/replace damaged insulation
- provide shade over outdoor loafing areas
- check water pressure is sufficient to maintain flow rates throughout all accommodation when demand for water is high
- frequently check water systems so any disruption in supply is identified rapidly
- frequently scrape dung passages so pigs can cool on solid floors without wallowing in faeces and urine

If you would like any further advice on minimising heat stress in your herd please get in touch with the practice.

In the mean time hopefully we will see some much needed rain soon.

Alex