

A big hand for pig producers

More than 200 pig producers have signed up to the Yorkshire and Humberside Health Scheme (YHH) which is now entering Stage Two, subject to final approval of the grant.

The excellent response from producers followed a series of regional meetings last Autumn with local producers, vets and BPEX.

Several pig producers have agreed to form 'cluster groups' which means they can log on to the website and see each other's health status and plan how to improve their biosecurity and health in collaboration.

■ Regional Health Co-ordinator Helen Clarke



Pig holdings of all sizes can get involved in the scheme at any time. Things to do to get started:

- Register online to view maps at www.yhh.org.uk
- Sign a disclosure form for vets to carry out the health survey at the next quarterly visit
- Get together in a cluster by viewing the maps and seeing where the nearest cluster is.

Contact Helen Clarke with questions, for details of nearby clusters and advice on any part of the scheme: 07973 701369 or helen.clarke@bpep.org.uk

Farms apply for health cash

Four pig producer groups have submitted in pilot applications for support for specific on-farm projects to improve pig health.

If successful, it is anticipated that all producer clusters in the Yorkshire and Humberside Health and Eastern Pig Health Schemes will soon be able to submit funding applications.

The schemes are all about working together, so applications must come from local groups of producers who are collaborating to improve pig health, rather than from individuals.

Funding is not guaranteed and each application will be assessed separately.

Any items accepted for funding will need to have an expected lifespan of more than five years.

Helen Clarke and Ross Lake at BPEX are there to help producer clusters work through their applications.

Now is the time to start planning how to make the most of the funding to improve pig health.

Contacts:

For Yorkshire and Humberside: Helen Clarke on 07973 701369, email helen.clarke@bpep.org.uk

For Eastern Pig Health: Ross Lake on 07792 681203, email ross.lake@bpep.org.uk

Vet survey shows disease pressure

Vital information about pig health status across Yorkshire is now available to the region's pig producers.

A total of 375 pig producers have been surveyed to date by veterinary surgeons as part of the Yorkshire and Humberside Health (YHH) programme.

Of these, 233 were declared to be in production and almost all of them gave their veterinary surgeon permission to record whether or not four important diseases were present on their units.

Enzootic pneumonia (EP) was present on 141 of the units and porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) was present on 136. Swine dysentery was recorded on 11 units and mange on eight.

BPEX Health Co-ordinator Helen Clarke said: "The pig units surveyed so far represent more than 33,000 sows and more than 206,000 finishing places, covering a mixture of weaner producers, breed to finish and finishing units. The data gives us a good indication of disease prevalence across the region.

"The enthusiasm, co-operation and willingness of producers to share health status information is very encouraging.

"Armed with this knowledge, producers who have joined up to YHH can make more effective decisions on how to manage biosecurity and improve pig health for the long term.

"This ultimately leads to higher physical herd performance and a more profitable business."

Biosecurity is key to improvements

BPEX has worked with vets to produce a simple-to-use assessment tool which provides a practical way to improve biosecurity on farm.

The tool can identify changes that can be made for relatively low cost and effort and is a practical method of improving biosecurity.

It is applicable to every farm and will provide a means of systematic review every quarter.

It requires no preparation and questions can all be answered on the spot. It is not incriminating in any way, it

merely highlights what may need more attention and sometimes outside eyes can see a solution to a problem where experienced eyes cannot.

This is a useful procedure to carry out on both larger-scale commercial units and smallholdings.

It is important that all pig keepers realise their responsibilities as part of the pig industry and are aware of the implications of poor biosecurity.

BPEX has also produced a biosecurity leaflet which highlights common challenges and tips on how to improve.

Funded through the **Rural Development Programme for England**

How the vet survey works

Vets in the region have worked closely with pig producers to complete the confidential pig health survey for the YHH project (see results to date on page 1).

It focuses on the four key diseases affecting the national pig herd – swine dysentery, PRRS, enzootic pneumonia and mange.

The results provide an overview of the level of incidence and economic impact across the region.

Gathering this information has been a key part of compiling the project's online map, designed to show first, where the pig units are and second what the health status of an area is.

All the information contained in the map helps producers make decisions on how best to work together in their local clusters to make lasting improvements in performance – and reduce production costs.

Spotlight is on diagnostic tools

A veterinary pilot project assessed state-of-the-art diagnostic tools for PRRS, EP, swine dysentery and mange.

The health status defined by these diagnostic tests was compared with veterinary opinion, to find out whether the results of the veterinary survey were likely to be an accurate reflection of the prevalence of disease in the region.

For both PRRS and EP, strong agreement between diagnostics and veterinary opinion was found.

The pilot also found that producers could potentially request blood sample collection from their abattoir and send these for testing, providing a quick, welfare-friendly and biosecure method of determining disease status.

Serological testing of colostrum was also trialled as a predictor of disease status for PRRS and EP in the breeding herd.

This would enable producers to collect their own samples to submit to their vet for testing, avoiding the need for a call-out and providing another alternative to blood sampling.

Faecal sampling tests for swine dysentery showed a 100% correlation

All units that register with the YHH project can use the interactive mapping service.

The map is divided into grid sections and, for each disease, registered producers can view the overall disease status for that area.

Grid squares are coloured as follows:

- Green = no units with any infection
- Amber = one or more units with infection that is being treated in some way
- Red = one or more units with infection, not being treated.

It is hoped that vets will continue to upload the surveys after each quarterly visit to keep the mapping system relevant and useful.

Vets can also help by encouraging producers to contact BPEX to put their location on the maps. BPEX contact details are below.

National opportunity for health schemes

An opportunity has opened up for pig health scheme funding across England.

All the regional agencies in England have agreed to work together on a national approach to disease mitigation, following the great effort from the pig industry.

Work now begins in earnest for BPEX to submit a proposal for a co-ordinated national health improvement project, building on the current Yorkshire and Humberside Health and Eastern Pig Health projects.

The Eastern Pig Health scheme is on target to get more than 80% of the region's sow herd signed up this month and it is anticipated a third initiative will start soon in the East Midlands.



between veterinary opinion and test results, with all units being classed as negative.

However, the testing threw up some false positives, suggesting that atypical,

less pathogenic strains are in existence or that subclinical dysentery was present.

This strengthens the need to apply more than one diagnostic modality when determining dysentery status.

Contacts

Regional Health Coordinator – YHH
Veterinary Projects Manager
Regional Health Coordinator – EPH

Helen Clarke
Charlotte Evans
Ross Lake

helen.clarke@bpex.org.uk
charlotte.evans@bpex.org.uk
ross.lake@bpex.org.uk

07973 701369
02476 478796
07792 681203

Useful websites

www.yhh.org.uk: this site contains all the documents needed for producers to sign up, access to the regional maps, decision and biosecurity tools.

www.easternpighealth.org.uk: this site contains all the documents needed for producers to sign up, decision and biosecurity tools.