

Major step forward for EPH

More than 80% of the eastern regions sows are now registered with EPH.

Pig producers need to meet this target to secure funding for Stage Two of the project.

However, the rapidly changing political and financial climate has resulted in the target dates being brought forward.

For producers not yet registered, go to www.pighealth.org.uk or call Ross Lake on 07792 681203.

Registration for EPH is a simple on-line process and gives pig producers free access to the health and biosecurity benefits the scheme will bring. Producers should go to www.pighealth.org.uk to sign up.

BPEX Health Co-ordinator Ross Lake said: "The support from vets and the



■ Regional Health Co-ordinator Ross Lake

response so far from producers in the East has been excellent.

"We anticipate the same enthusiasm and co-operation that was shown for the

highly successful Swine Dysentery Charter in 2008, for which 80% of the region's sows were quickly signed up.

"The number of new swine dysentery cases in fell significantly in 2009 and the EPH scheme aims to go much further.

"As well as swine dysentery, producers are now focusing on porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) virus and enzootic pneumonia (EP) and will be collaborating with vets and the ancillary trades on new ways to improve bio-security."

All producers signing up to EPH will benefit from access to an online map of pig units and herd health status information, free diagnostic testing, improved bio-security, online management tools and disease alerts.

Biosecurity is key to better health

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. The tool requires no preparation.

Questions can all be answered on the spot and highlights what may need more attention.

Sometimes outside eyes can see a solution to a problem where experienced eyes cannot.

This is a useful procedure to carry out both on 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 produced a biosecurity leaflet which highlights the common challenges and tips on how to improve.

Industry support for scheme

A meeting for the ancillary trade organisations saw many of them offering support to EPH.

Practical initiatives that could play a part in improving pig health were discussed and examples include improvements in lorry washing facilities and biosecurity; protocols; planning delivery routes; discounted goods and services to producers; sponsorship of biosecurity signage on farms and vehicles and publicity via websites and news articles

Better knowledge of customers' health

status in particular areas means firms can plan their routes accordingly.

Major feed companies use GPS to:

- track vehicles to within three metres
- backtrack to see when a vehicle was last cleaned and disinfected
- direct vehicles away from high risk areas.

The possibility of a Gold Standard mark was suggested to give recognition to those who operate a high level of biosecurity. This includes producers, livestock hauliers, deadstock collectors and feed companies.

Vet surveys under way

Vets in the Eastern region are now surveying pig farms which have registered for the EPH scheme.

The results will provide an overview of the level of incidence and economic impact of the three key diseases across the region.

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

The vets' role is to collect information from pig units during quarterly visits so that they can provide relevant and up-to-date information about each unit to the scheme.

The vet survey will take about an extra five minutes to complete and the additional vet time will be paid for by EPH.

Producers need to give permission for their vets to complete the survey by printing and signing declaration forms to sign to give to their vet.

Eastern Pig Health is funded by the East of England Development Agency and BPEX

Spotlight on VLA health issues

The Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) reports on interesting pig cases submitted for diagnosis.

BPEX regional health co-ordinator Ross Lake has picked out a couple of current health issues in the East Anglian pig herd to note.

Swine dysentery: No further outbreaks have been diagnosed in the region since June when two farms were found to be infected.

One of these was a smallholding and the other was an indoor unit which has since been depopulated and is being cleaned and disinfected.

Influenza: Pandemic H1N1 (the strain currently circulating in humans) continues to be diagnosed in the region.

Pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza strain is just one of three influenza strains currently circulating in UK pigs. Outbreaks of respiratory disease due to pandemic H1N1 2009 in pigs have not been very different from outbreaks due to other strains.

If anything disease is milder and subclinical infections also occur, particu-



larly in adult pigs. A useful Q and A can be found at http://www.defra.gov.uk/vla/diseases/docs/dis_si_qa.pdf

The VLA offers free testing of pigs for swine influenza and details can be found at http://www.defra.gov.uk/vla/diseases/docs/dis_si_info.pdf

■ the SD charter continues to be effective

■ H1N1 continues to be detected so bio-security is paramount (Action for Productivity 13: Biosecurity, see www.bpex.org.uk).

■ simple and cost effective routine treatments are being missed by small holders and commercial producers (Action for Productivity 1: Regular Worming).

Sign up for Eastern Pig Health

Producers can follow some simple steps online to register for EPH.

- Go to www.pighealth.org.uk
- Log in using a BPEX username and password. For those who have not used BPEX online services before, go to the 'producer registration area and submit your herd information, then a username will be sent by email.
- Confirm agreement to the terms and conditions. This can be done online or by fax/post.
- Accept the Veterinary Disclosure agreement. This can be done online or by fax/post.

● Your vet carries out the survey. It is free for producers and takes 5-10 minutes at the end of a routine quarterly vet visit.

● Your vet submits the completed survey. This information will go on the regional online map. You will then be able to view the map showing the location and disease status of all the EPH registered herds.

Producers can also join the Swine Dysentery Producer Charter to help eradicate the disease in the region. The Charter was set up in East Anglia in 2008 and has been successful in reducing cases among charter members to zero in 2010.

Applications for pig health cash

Four pig producer groups will put in pilot applications next month for support for specific on-farm projects to improve pig health.

If successful, it is anticipated that all producer groups 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 producers work through their applications. Now is the time to start planning how they can make the most of the funding to improve pig health. Contact details are below.

Opportunity for national approach to health funding

An opportunity has opened 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 so far.

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.

Contacts

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Useful websites

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

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.