Australian Pork NEWSPAPER

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Rachael Bryant

Lechelle van Breda

Business improvement opportunities from APL

AUSTRALIAN Pork

by PETER HAYDON
Research and Innovation General Manager

AS mentioned in April's article, the research team has continued to focus on finding ways to reduce production costs, keep our farms safe and improve our licence to operate.

In a time where it's difficult to get any news not related to COVID-19, we thought we'd put together an update on a few things the Research and Innovation team has been working to deliver.

Accelerating herd health improvement – Lechelle van Breda

Autogenous vaccines are vaccines made from bacteria taken from sick or deceased pigs at a specific farm.

Most of you probably use them to protect against farm-specific strains of APP, E. coli and streptococcus suis among other things, and in addition to keeping our pigs healthy, they will also be essential in the long term in reducing reliance on antimicrobials on-farm.

Australian Pork Limited was successful in getting a grant from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment in response to an industry-identified desire to improve the timeliness of autogenous vaccine permitting.

Autogenous vaccines require registration and a permit from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority before they can be used.

It can take over 12 months for approval.

As such, there are probably financial and welfare costs associated with preventable diseases because of slow vaccine approvals.

This is an unnecessary burden on an industry already challenged with maintaining farm profitability.

APL consulted with producers, autogenous vaccine manufacturers and APVMA to contribute to significant improvements, streamlining the approval process.

In turn, this is expected to lead to quicker access to autogenous vaccines, which will aid Australian pig farmers in raising healthy pigs.

Increasing revenue through abattoir feedback – Vaibhav Gole

It has been estimated the accumulated cost and loss due to full or partial condemnation of pig carcasses denies the industry of $10.33 million annually.

Veterinarians suggest up to $5.7 million of this could be prevented through the introduction of real-time feedback from processors to producers.

An APL project is currently under way running pilot trials using a standardised list of animal carcass, viscera and offal health conditions in con-

☛ continued P5

The rise and fall of the virus impact

AUSTRALIAN Pork

Point of View

by MARGO ANDRAE CEO

RECENT weeks have tested the strength and agility of Australia's pork producers and our markets in unprecedented ways.

For our industry, the significant social and economic disruption caused by COVID-19 will have long-lasting impacts, of which many will be difficult to predict.

For now, our supply chains are adapting to the loss of foodservice sales, which normally absorb about a quarter of all Australian pork, particularly popular restaurant cuts like ribs and bellies.

An additional challenge has been navigating freight difficulties for exports, which usually accounts for 10 percent of our production.

Australian Pork Limited, exporters, government and importing countries have worked together to ensure flights have been secured for chilled consignments to Singapore and new markets such as Hong Kong and Vietnam, helping to meet strong import demand and offsetting local surplus in Australia.

However, indications are that imports have levelled off.

The two-paced impact of COVID-19 has seen fresh pork retail sales grow by 26.8 percent in volume and 35.7 percent in value compared to 12 months ago.

Indeed, overall grocery sales in March surged and were 18 percent higher than Christmas 2019.

Driving the increase has been demand for cook-at-home meals like pork roast, pork mince, ribs and rashers.

An initial spike in sales as consumers raided retail shelf space for meat to freeze has normalised, and a key focus of Australian Pork Limited's marketing response has been providing accessible information to assist consumers who have been preparing pork meals at home.

Nonetheless and somewhat inevitably domestic wholesale inventories have mounted in recent weeks and overall carcass values have fallen.

This is undermining producer confidence and creating uncertainty for individuals and families whose livelihoods depend on a profitable pig industry.

APL will continue to support all supply chain stakeholders to find innovative ways to market and promote Australian pork during this volatile period.

With this in mind, I want to thank everyone participating in the Hospo4Hospo initiative – an ongoing partnership between the pork industry and a number of restaurants – which has served up more than 1000 free meals to hospitality staff unemployed due to foodservice closures.

While all our retail and foodservice outlets are important, I am particularly proud of the role we've played in supporting butchers through the COVID-19 pandemic.

These predominantly small family owned independent businesses have remained open for trade and not surprisingly have increased their market share in recent weeks.

From the outset industry ensured Australian butchers were deemed essential services, in contrast to New Zealand where butchers were forced to close.

This not only reduced competition and consumer choice, it played havoc with pork production systems and supply chains geared specifically to service the butcher trade.

Though even the serious disruptions in NZ seem relatively minor compared to the problems faced in North America, where producers are grappling to manage the turn-off of large volumes of prime pigs because major US processors have closed due to COVID-19 infections.

I'm pleased to say our producers in Australia have stayed focused on supplying consistent volumes of high-quality locally grown pork, which has continued to add so much economic value to our national economy at this crucial time.

A versatile and affordable meat, Australian pork is favourably placed to emerge in the post-COVID-19 world in a stronger position, both in domestic and export marketplaces.

Though this will depend on how quickly impacted supply chain businesses are able to resume normal trading operations and overcome the legacy of the extended shut-down period.

Government support for businesses in the form of payroll tax relief and JobKeeper rebates will prove crucial to helping this recovery.

Reports that several foodservice businesses are reinstating staff and have chosen to use the time for training, maintenance and renovation conveys genuine optimism about the future.

Producers and related businesses in need of assistance with information related to COVID-19 can contact APL directly or visit agriculture.gov.au/coronavirus/industry

Oxidative status of fats and oils is important to pigs

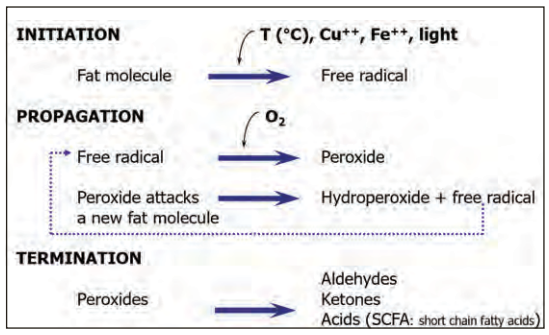

Figure 1: Oxidation pathway (simplified).

THE oxidation process is complex and generally not well understood and often overlooked in the routine activities of formulating diets and feeding pigs.

The steps and stages of oxidation are well described (such as in Figure 1), but the chemistry is complicated and includes terms like 'free radicals' and 'reactive oxygen species' that add to the mystery of oxidation.

Confusion continues when the word 'peroxidation' is sometimes used in place of oxidation – peroxidation being the oxidation of fats and oils, that is, lipids.

The chemical pathways aren't very helpful when trying to relate (per-)oxidation to the practicalities of formulating and feeding diets containing fats and oils.

Fortunately, we can test fats and oils for oxidation indicators to create indicative standards, such as peroxide value, thiobarbituric acid reactive substances – but which measurement(s) relates to pig growth performance?

Additional tests can be used to help predict the oxidative stability of fats and oils and protein meals containing residual fat/oil, including an oxygen bomb test and oxygen stability index test.

Oxidation is a normal process occurring both in the body and in fats, oils, protein meals and other ingredients fed to pigs.

Oxidative 'stress' can arise when an imbalance between free radicals (reactive oxygen atoms) and antioxidants (antioxidants pair up with free radicals making them less reactive) occurs.

The body has its own antioxidant system and increased awareness of non-infectious diseases related to oxidative stress has led to people consciously consuming foods and supplements that contain antioxidants.

Similarly, antioxidants can be added to pig diets including into fats and oils, protein meals and vitamin/mineral premixes to insure against oxidative degradation.

Apart from ever-present oxygen, factors that can promote oxidation include temperature increases and the presence of metal ions (such as copper, iron and manganese).

The presence of water in fats and oils leads to another process called hydrolysis, resulting in increased production of free fatty acids, which increases the susceptibility to oxidation.

So while the initial oxidative status of feed ingredients is important, also of critical importance are the climatic conditions during storage (season), storage location (indoors/outdoors), storage conditions (tank hygiene) and the duration of storage of the feed ingredients used in diets as well as the final feed containing the oxidisable ingredients.

Pig's response to oxidised fats and oils

Table 1 summarises the changes in growth rate, feed intake and feed conversion ratio in pigs when fed oxidised fats/oils compared with non-oxidised fats/oils (Hung et. al., 2017)

	% Recordings with negative responses	Ave. % response	Range of % responses
ADG	78	-9	-35 to +5
ADFI	74	-6	-23 to +10
FCR	61	-3	-16 to +6

Table 1: Summarised changes (%) due to oxidised fats/oils, calculated from 23 recordings from eight studies; ADG, average daily gain; ADFI, average daily feed intake; FCR, feed conversion ratio.

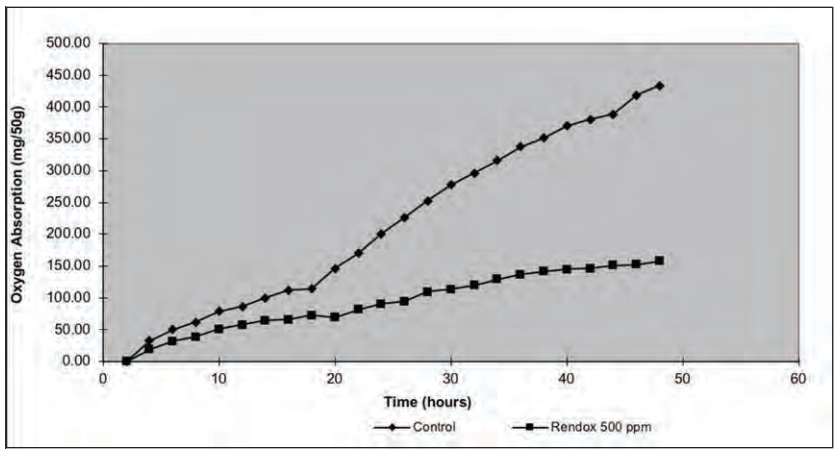

Figure 2: Oxygen absorption over time for an untreated tallow sample and a sample from the same source with a liquid antioxidant.

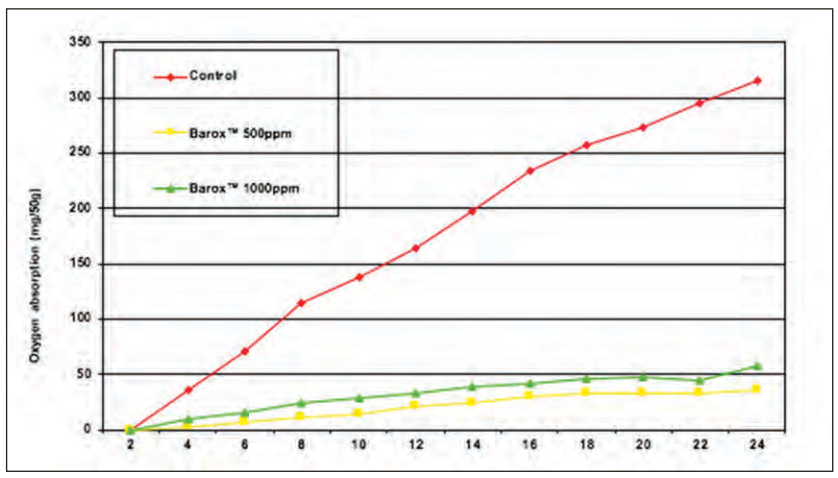

Figure 3: Oxygen absorption over time for an untreated poultry oil sample and a sample from the same source treated with a liquid antioxidant.

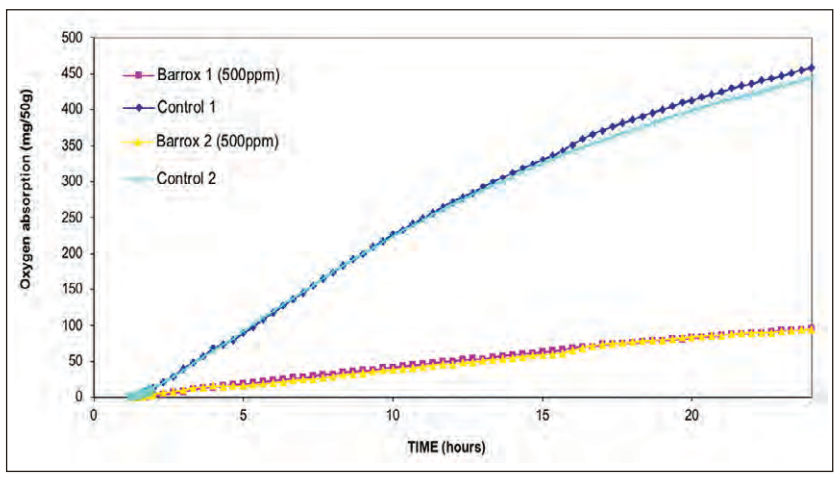

Figure 4: Oxygen absorption over time for an untreated fish oil sample and a sample from the same source treated with a liquid antioxidant.

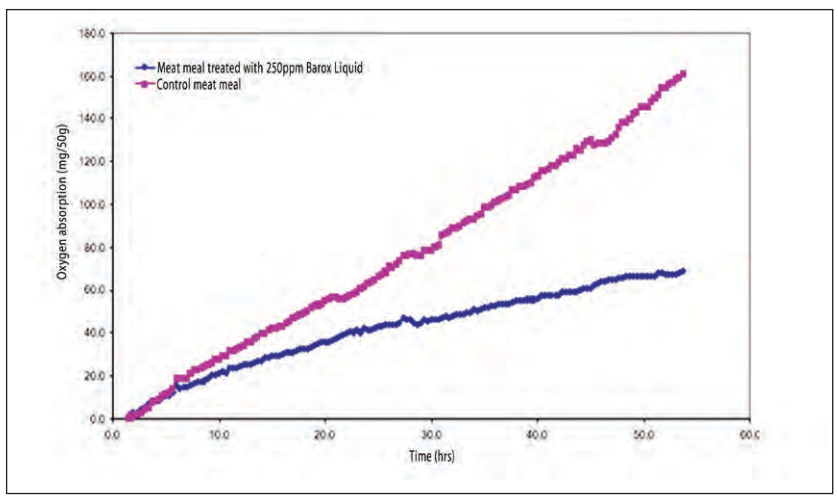

Figure 5: Oxygen absorption over time for an untreated meat meal sample and a sample from the same source treated with a liquid antioxidant.

Boyd et. al. (2019) considered younger pigs as particularly susceptible to the negative impacts of peroxide stress including oxidative-induced disruption to the intestinal wall.

Actions

Actions needed to help prevent the negative impacts of feeding oxidised feed ingredients include:

1. Know the oxidative status of fats and oils at the time of purchase;
2. Manage these purchased ingredients appropriately, including
   - tanks used to store fats/oils should be properly cleaned at least four times per year,
   - where tanks are outside, locate them in the coolest location,
   - endeavour to turnover inventory regularly;
3. Have a suitable antioxidant included at an appropriate level by the producer of the fats/oils or add the antioxidant to the fats/oils on arrival at the feed mill (large or small); and
4. Advice from a consulting pig veterinarian (Dr Peter McKenzie 2019, pers. comm.) is not to use peroxidised fats/oils and suggests the use of antioxidant-treated canola oil in lactating sow and weaner diets to help achieve more consistent and stable reproductive performance and progeny growth rate. Dr McKenzie advises this is an important component of a broader 'health by management' program because peroxide-induced poor growth rate often results in the use of antibiotics (which do not address oxidative damage).

Insure against oxidation/peroxidation with an antioxidant

Including a liquid antioxidant into fats and oils is inexpensive insurance against the invisible but potentially damaging effects of oxidation.

Antioxidants slow the progress of oxidation and are sacrificed in the process.

Relative risk ratings can be ascribed to varying conditions with antioxidant dose rates adjusted accordingly (Table 2).

These ratings assume high-quality feed ingredients of low oxidative status on arrival at the feed mill.

To help ensure this, and to protect oxidative stability during storage, treat fats/oils with a suitable antioxidant at a level appropriate to the conditions and duration of storage.

While this is best done at the time of production of the fats/oils, it can be done on arrival at the feed mill.

Examples of preserving the oxidative stability of fats and oils with properly formulated antioxidants are shown in figures 2 (tallow), 3 (poultry oil), 4 (fish oil) and 5 (meat meal).

The oxygen bomb test was used in these examples as an accelerated stress test.

Comparing tallow, poultry oil and fish oil, the oxygen absorption values for the control samples after 24 hours were 201mg, 315mg and 450mg respectively, indicating the increasing sensitivity of these lipid sources to oxidation.

The inclusion of 500g/tonne of a liquid antioxidant prevented the loss of oxidative stability in all three of these fat/oil sources.

The inclusion of 250g of a liquid antioxidant ensured stability of meat meal, which typically contains 10-12 percent fat (Figure 5).

Summary

Oxidised/oxidising fats and oils have negative impacts on young pigs;

- Knowledge of the oxidative status of fats and oils is useful;
- Storage conditions and storage duration are relevant to the ongoing quality of fats and oils; and
- Insurance against oxidative degradation of fats and oils by including a suitable liquid antioxidant at an appropriate level is recommended.

Rick Carter
Kemin Industries Technical Services Manager

Risk factor	Feed ingredients	Finished feed
1. Quicker inventory turnover		
a) cool, dry conditions	L	L
b) warm, hot conditions	M	M-L[1]
c) mainly saturated fat	L	L
d) higher unsaturated fat level	M	M-L[1]
e) 'typical' fat content	L	L
f) high fat content	M	M-L[1]
2. Slower inventory turnover		
a) cool, dry conditions	M	M-L[1]
b) warm, hot conditions	H	H-M[1]
c) mainly saturated fat	M	M-L[1]
d) higher unsaturated fat level	H	H-M[1]
e) 'typical' fat content	M	M-L[1]
f) high fat content	H	H-M[1]

Table 2: Oxidation relative risk rating for feed ingredients and finished feed (H=high risk, M=medium risk, L=low risk). 1, lower risk rating when fat/oil/protein meal has been protected with an antioxidant.

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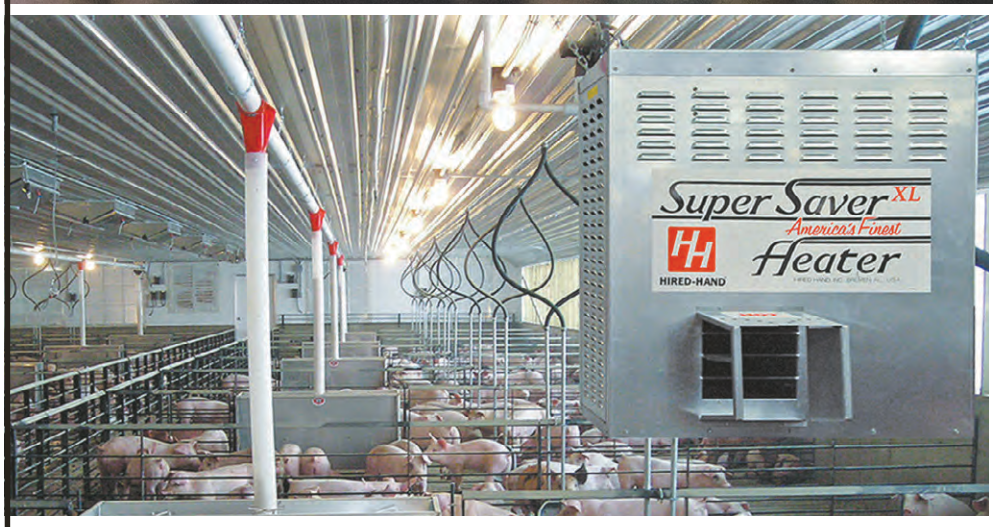

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A quiet but high achiever, Dr Conny Turni was well supported and highly regarded by Pork CRC back in the day. More recently APL has assisted in her ongoing outstanding porcine respiratory research.

Breathtaking research led by a quiet achiever

QUEENSLAND researchers have discovered that a previously unrecognised bacterium is responsible for signs of lung disease found in pig carcasses, rather than a similar internationally recognised infection the animals had been vaccinated against.

Having solved the disease mystery, the research team at the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation is now working to develop on-farm tests and treatments for the new infection.

Several years ago it was noticed that lesions, abscesses and pleurisy found in the lungs of pigs at abattoirs looked very similar to those associated with a known serious pig respiratory disease – porcine pleuropneumonia.

This is caused by the bacterium actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae, which was assumed to be the culprit despite the fact the animals had been fully vaccinated.

Porcine pleuropneumonia is a major economic disease that causes animals to lose weight at a critical growth stage.

Previous research has shown animal average daily gain can drop by up to 20 percent until halted by treatment, with the animal requiring 20 or so days to recover.

This leads to a considerable increase in production costs.

Cant Comment by BRENDON CANT

If a producer decided to sell the animals underweight, the losses could be as high as $A60 per pig.

With Australian Pork Limited support QAAFI researchers discovered one new species and a potential new species of lung-infecting bacteria, which put to rest concerns that current vaccines weren't working.

University of Queensland project leader Dr Conny Turni said when the unexplained signs of disease were found, it was in the same growth period in which porcine pleuropneumonia caused by actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae occurs.

However, the pigs are vaccinated for this, so there could only be two possibilities – either the vaccines weren't working or there was another pathogen at work causing a similar disease and in some way interfering with the efficacy of the vaccines.

"We had been storing isolates from some diseased pigs but hadn't been able to identify them until a couple of years ago when we had two masters students work on them, and they determined that a number of these isolates represented a new bacterial species," Dr Turni said.

However, the researchers couldn't continue the formal process of describing and naming the new species because the discovery occurred at the same time that the closest known relative to the new organism haemophilus parasuis was being renamed glaesserella by US researchers.

Once the new genus was formally recognised in 2019, the QAAFI researchers could announce glaesserella australis as a new species.

According to Dr Turni, g. australis is associated with two disease scenarios.

One is where there are no apparent clinical signs of disease on-farm, but at the abattoir the carcass has lesions and abscesses in the lungs that are very similar to those caused by actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae.

In the other scenario, g. australis causes clinical signs in pigs on-farm at 12 to 20 weeks of age, with some cases being fatal.

Continuing research into g. australis has led to a diagnostic assay being validated, which is testing 26 g. australis isolates, 15 reference strains and one field isolate of a. pleuropneumoniae, 16 reference strains for another bacterium pasteurella multocida that causes respiratory disease, and another 47 strains and field isolates representing 12 genera and 26 species of similar bacteria.

To determine the prevalence of g. australis, the researchers sampled lungs with lesions, abscesses and pleurisy from 23 farms in NSW, 43 in Queensland, one in South Australia and 27 in Victoria.

This data is still being analysed.

For future on-farm diagnosis, the QAAFI team is investigating the potential for nasal and tonsil swabbing to see if this will detect the bacterium in live pigs, which would simplify control and management of the disease.

The project is also examining methods to determine the antimicrobial sensitivity profile of g. australis isolates to help the industry develop targeted, effective treatment programs.

Maintaining production in the time of coronavirus

Nordic News

by ASHLEY NORVAL

IN Denmark we are now in the initial stages of the gradual reopening process.

The majority of society remains closed, with younger children returning to childcare/schools part-time and some other 'essential' services reopening in the week of writing (namely hairdressers and tattoo artists – though I am unsure how exactly these are considered essential!).

Up until this point, only grocery stores and pharmacies had been allowed to trade in person.

As of next week, some other stores will be allowed to begin trade once more.

Additionally, as of this week staff at Danish 'non-essential' offices can begin to return to work at 50 percent capacity until the planned 100 percent return on May 11.

Pig prices have slipped a little in the past few weeks but are holding at a respectable level, with the Danish Crown reporting prices for slaughter pigs of 12.90 DKK per kilogram for week 18 ($A2.93).

Thirty kilogram weaner export continues to remain and operate as normal.

Thankfully we have seen no shut-downs of processing plants such as that of Smithfield in the US due to mass COVID-19 infections of staff.

However, the managing of staff at both the farm and processing level continues to be a challenge for an industry that relies on a workforce sourced primarily outside Denmark.

I have heard of many farms where staff are 'stuck' in their home countries they were visiting since the closing of the borders (six weeks prior to writing).

For some businesses, this has meant running on a skeleton staff and operating as they would during the heavy holiday periods, and this is unlikely to change until at least mid-May.

There have been some very misleading articles and campaigns released here with regard to the development of the pandemic – specifically targeting climate change and animal production as the reason for this disease and its spread.

Not surprisingly, the agenda of these campaigns is of course to encourage a vegan lifestyle and producers have been warned to be particularly vigilant against animal activism.

Some activists have made their presence known on farms, which is in violation of not only trespassing laws but also National Board of Health laws, though this does not seem to deter them.

Researchers from the State Serum Institute together with the University of Copenhagen have mapped different types of coronaviruses in Denmark, including viruses that occur in wild animals, production animals and pets.

In a recently released report, Anette Bøtner (Professor and Head of Section, SSI) has confirmed there is currently no evidence that pets nor industrial animals play any role in connection with the spread of COVID-19.

This message and report is currently being circulated around Denmark in response to the animal activist campaigns in an effort to reassure consumers of the strict Danish food safety standards and encourage their purchase of Danish produce.

In a more positive outcome during an otherwise challenging few months, recent times have seen more engagement between farmers via a private Facebook group named 'Grisen' (pigs).

This is a closed group managed by the main Danish farming agricultural newspaper and is designed to encourage the debating of professional questions about pig production and subsequent knowledge transfer between industry members.

With over 4600 members, all aspects of pig production are up for discussion with anyone involved in the Danish pig industry.

The majority of members are either pig producers, managers or farm staff, however veterinarians, consultants and SEGES/ Landbrug og Fødevarer representatives are also active within the forums.

Producers have been sharing their staff managements strategies and supported each other within this forum, both in the sense of practical advice ('send as many pigs to slaughter earlier so you are two to three weeks ahead of delivery'), but also in terms of sharing their staff with those in need.

Despite the challenging circumstances currently being faced, it is encouraging to see producers are able to support each other and continue to work together, not only to maintain pig production but also to keep unwanted diseases out of their herds.

Business improvement opportunities from APL

☛ from P1

junction with feedback report templates.

These provide data on which conditions exist and the related consequences to both producers and processors.

As this project continues, pilots will be run in a larger number of domestic and export abattoirs, with case studies to be developed and reporting templates refined.

It is expected the project will be completed by March 2021.

Maintaining stockperson productivity – Rachael Bryant

ProHand is a course teaching stockpeople in the pork industry how to ensure they are interacting positively with pigs.

It covers how to move pigs in a low-stress way that may result in an improvement in animal welfare and productivity.

It is well recognised and widely used by Australian pig farmers and their staff and has been delivered through an online system for several years.

Work has been under way at APL to move the current ProHand pigs, abattoir and review courses to a new and improved online platform.

In addition to housing existing content, the new platform will enable producers and other industry stakeholders to directly register their own staff for ProHand, oversee their progress during the course and access reports on staff, site and company use.

While the course has been built on the new platform, it is currently undergoing testing with the original course developers at the University of Melbourne's Animal Welfare Science Centre.

APL plans to relaunch the ProHand pigs and the ProHand review courses by the end of May, with the ProHand abattoir course to follow in November 2020.

Vaibhav Gole

Drivers of consumption volatility in pork industry

AUSTRALIAN Pork®

Marketing Matters

by PETER HAYDON

THE COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted our lives in recent weeks and is causing a high degree of demand and supply irregularity.

For our industry, this is causing a high degree of volatility, particularly for uncontracted pigs.

As I see it, there are five causes to the short-term situation.

Grocery shopping increased as people substituted food eaten out-of-home to in-home.

In the pre-pandemic stable market about 74 percent of food was bought for in-home consumption and 26 percent for out-of-home.

Consumer behaviour changed rapidly, and in the defining two weeks of madness due to the close of cafés and restaurants that changed to about 90 percent in-home and 10 percent takeaway, which has possibly risen to about 15 percent now.

Therefore substitution should have increased grocery food sales by around 22 percent.

Nielsen data reveals in the four weeks to March 22 grocery dollar sales increased 34 percent, fresh meat 25 percent and processed meat 18 percent versus the same period in 2019.

The change saw a rapid increase in retail meat sales, a little faster than expected.

The problem being foodservice is a major source of demand for cuts like ribs and bellies.

Restrictions in stores have impacted these two cuts in particular and that has driven down wholesale carcass value.

People bought more of the meat they are most familiar with.

As per the table indicating beef mince driving freezer stocks, meat sales tended to be relatively cheap cuts, so consumers now have higher volumes stored at home.

There were weeks in the period from March to Easter where grocery sales were 35 percent up on the same week a year ago – that's when in-home stocks went through the roof.

This is when supermarket shelves were bare of meat.

Which means people have unfamiliar cuts and species in their freezers.

APL doubled versatility and how-to-cook activities to ensure people will know how to use their pork purchases and have a satisfying eating experience.

This included traditional media as well as podcasts, catch-up TV, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and digital partnerships – to get our messages to consumers while they are confined to their homes.

Like any balanced system, when the meat supply equilibrium is rocked by extreme actions it responds by over-reacting.

I believe this has undesirable consequences.

First, pork and beef mince get pulled forward to satisfy demand.

So now we're experiencing a system that is oversupplying what was panic-bought in previous weeks.

Everyone knows it has to end – people probably aren't eating more – but no one knows when.

Second, we are experiencing in-home destocking to some extent.

Which may occur quickly, conversely, it may occur slowly.

Some commercial players will see this change as disastrous and for others it'll be an opportunity.

Wholesalers that supply retail will see opportunities at the expense of foodservice-focused businesses.

Some supply chains were able to flex very quickly, while others continue to adjust.

Predicting supply flows will be difficult, with the added complexities of government COVID-19 restrictions, freight changes and border controls, and prices for pigs will be volatile.

That's unfortunate given that this time of year is usually when pork production improves.

For exporters, the near standstill of international aircraft movement has added further headaches.

APL has been collaborating with exporters to keep export channels open.

The world is still short of pork and we are trying to get more options for sales.

We are looking to support further gains in international sales, which showed growth in February in Vietnam, Hong Kong and Singapore.

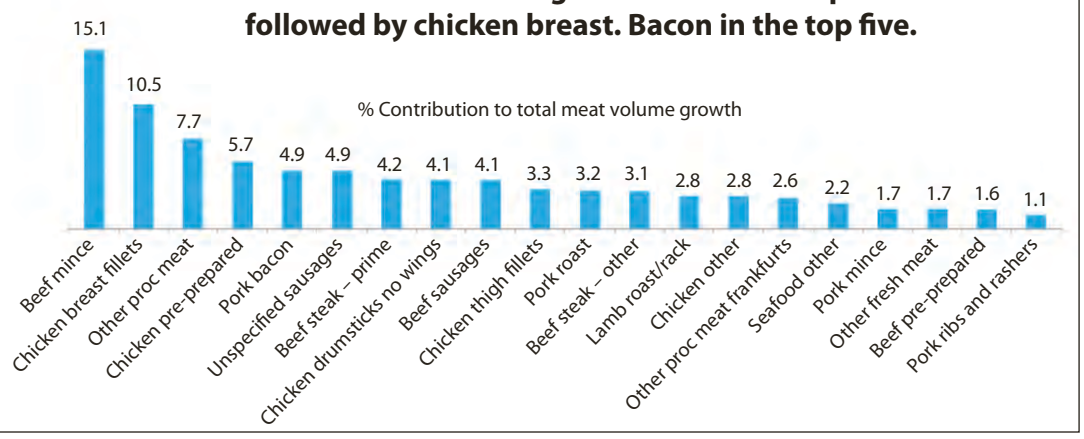
We are still investigating every option, including potential government-funded charity meat donations of roast pork for Foodbank and similar organisations.

Though the over-supply of meat varieties in the week commencing April 20 postponed the conversation, we will try again.

This is a challenging time for everyone and the situation is evolving quickly.

While our consumers are changing purchasing behaviour, we'll keep working to help them get some pork on their forks.

Beef mince driving the freezer stock up followed by chicken breast. Bacon in the top five.



APL calculation based in part on data reported by Nielsen through its Homescan Service for the meat category four weeks to March 22, 2020 versus a year ago, for the total Australian market according to the Nielsen standard product hierarchy. Copyright © 2020 The Nielsen Company.

Australian help for swine fever fight

AUSTRALIA has mobilised biosecurity, logistics and communications experts to work with Papua New Guinean counterparts to deal with an outbreak of African swine fever.

Agriculture Minister David Littleproud and Foreign Affairs Minister Senator Marise Payne said the Australian government's urgent multi-agency response aimed to slow the spread of ASF in Papua New Guinea and prevent its incursion onto our shores.

"With the confirmation of ASF in our near neighbour, our biosecurity measures are more important than ever because it could devastate Australia's pork industry if it were to arrive here," Minister Littleproud said.

"We commend Papua New Guinea for its quick action in responding to the outbreak, and we will continue to offer support to Papua New Guinea as it works to contain this disease."

Minister Payne said Australia is providing technical, risk communications, logistics and strategic co-ordination support through its Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Plus program.

"We are assisting PNG with technical assistance through the provision of a veterinarian, help to establish a local disease control centre and the provision of logistics support at the location of the outbreak," Minister Payne said.

"A key part of our response is the deployment of a risk communications specialist to increase public awareness, which includes the production of targeted messages."

Minister Payne said the support is whole-of-government, with the ADF and AFP working closely with PNG counterparts to establish checkpoints to reduce the spread of the fever, while the Department of Home Affairs is working with the PNG government in relation to import controls.

The government released its $66.6 million ASF border security response package last year, and additional interventions of flights from PNG have been introduced in response to this detection.

Antimicrobial resistance on the back burner but still burning

IN this world of African swine fever risk and COVID-19 it is easy to forget a silent and more insidious global pandemic.

Globally, antimicrobial resistance, as of April 2020, accounts for an estimated 2000 human deaths per week due to treatment failure.

Countries with the highest resistance include China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

Those with lower levels of resistance include, according to a US dataset released by the US-based Centre for Disease Control, the US, UK and the lowest of the group, the Netherlands, which has had strong animal antimicrobial use policies in place for 20 years.

This data headlined an international webinar in April led by Twan van Gerwe and Fellipe Barbosa, global managers for poultry and swine, together with Andreas Michels, head of biotechnology, from German company EW Nutrition.

While the data drew from research in poultry, the principles can be directly extended to pig production and preventative medicine practices.

For example, resistance to commonly deployed antimicrobials in poultry production in the Netherlands and Vietnam was shown to be more prevalent in poultry workers than the general community.

And the data showed that specific antimicrobial resistance was more likely to occur in family members of poultry farm workers than in the general community.

The resistant bugs are being spread from the poultry to the staff and then to their families.

And pig farm workers carry resistance genes closely related to those in swine.

It is a complex field.

Studies from the UK in 2019 and 2020 found E. coli causing serious human infection had not originated with livestock.

Hospital environments were the important source of human infections.

There was a low prevalence of shared antimicrobial resistance genes between livestock and people.

In a separate Dutch study from 2017, bacterial isolates in the general population had similarities to those from health clinics, surface and sewerage water and wild birds rather than livestock farms.

But when people and their pets were sampled, as in a 2016 Brazil study, pet dogs were shown to be a potential household source of multi-resistant E. coli strains.

So, who is right?

Everybody has a role to play.

A large 2019 Dutch study of the prevalence of specific resistance genes involving thousands of isolates found most acquired resistance was attributed to human to human transmission within or between households (60 percent).

Food accounted for 18.9 percent of carriage, pets 7.9 percent and farm animals (non- occupational) 3.6 percent.

Environmental contact (wild birds and swimming in fresh water) accounted for 2.6 percent of resistance carriage.

Humans are the main source of the community-acquired resistance studied, however, the attributable non-human sources underpin the need for ongoing monitoring.

Intracommunity resistance spread alone is unlikely to be self-maintaining without transmission to and from non-human sources.

Antimicrobial resistance involves us, our families, our staff, our pets and the food we produce.

Comparatively, Australia makes a strong contribution to good antimicrobial resistance practice.

We are going to be asked to do more through reducing the use of antibiotics, optimal husbandry, high biosecurity standards and feed quality.

COVID-19 will eventually be contained.

Antimicrobial resistance shows little signs of abating in the medium-term.

It requires ongoing attention.

Ross Cutler

Stockyard technical team here to help during COVID-19

STOCKYARD Industries has adapted during COVID-19, and with the recent ramping-up of farm biosecurity against African swine fever, has remained fully operational to help pork producers and to provide remote technical assistance for Big Dutchman and older shed climate controllers.

Stockyard technical personnel are based in South Australia, Victoria and Queensland to offer on-farm practical help during the interstate travel bans.

Our people have working knowledge of the controllers we've sold in the past, and of the simulators for the Big Dutchman controllers we're now supplying.

In most situations, we can advise and help troubleshoot onsite controller problems without having to physically travel to the site.

Stockyard understands strong customer service is key for production facilities, particularly coming into winter when ventilation rates change from summer vent to minimum vent.

For Big Dutchman 307pro controllers attached to BigFarmNet, our technicians have the ability to log into the farm and controller from any location globally to support the producer.

We can assist with the diagnosis of problems with shed environment or help make changes to settings.

Specialist technician Shane Daykin has been with Stockyard for over 10 years and can work though problems with older model controls over the phone.

We can also support producers with online manuals and training videos, which are easily accessible.

Stockyard technical personnel can utilise video conferencing software such as Zoom to host training sessions, with screen sharing capability if further clarification is required on manuals and a whiteboard function to illustrate issues from pictures taken inside buildings.

Stockyard Industries is at the forefront of the pig industry in Australia with building design and construction, ventilation systems, feed systems and feeders, electronic sow feeding, penning from weaners to sows, farrowing systems and various consumable items used in piggeries.

For more information, visit stockyardindustries.com

Technician Douglas Chadambuka commissioning a Big Dutchman 307pro controller into a new farrowing shed.

Apiam Animal Health's Zoono sanitiser a major breakthrough in COVID-19 prevention

ONE of Australia's largest veterinary service providers Apiam Animal Health, having recently secured distribution rights of a revolutionary surface sanitiser and protection nanotechnology, has had its Z-71 Microbe Shield product approved by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration for use against COVID-19.

The TGA approval comes on the back of research conducted in the UK against a COVID-19 surrogate – feline coronavirus – where Z-71 Microbe Shield was able to reduce viral levels by over 99.99 percent.

Apiam managing director Dr Chris Richards said the biggest difference between this sanitiser and others on the market is that Z-71 Microbe Shield continues to remain effective over time, through killing pathogens by mechanical rather than chemical action.

"It has been demonstrated through extensive research over 10 years against a range of pathogens to be effective for up to 30 days.

"Laboratory tests are currently progressing to establish the duration of protection the Z-71 Microbe Shield product will have against a COVID-19 surrogate."

Apiam has demonstrated 30-day pathogen protection in its animal field studies against a similar coronavirus that causes high mortality in young pigs.

"Both mechanical and chemical sanitisers will kill most pathogens almost straight away but the fact it has been tested to be effective against many germs for up to 30 days on surfaces is a major breakthrough," Dr Richards said.

Apiam acquired the distribution rights for the livestock and animal health industries in Australia in November last year for the disinfectant technology, which is manufactured in New Zealand by Zoono Group Limited.

"We were initially attracted to the Zoono products for use by our network of vets to sanitise and protect piggeries, poultry sheds and livestock systems, as well as for use in biosecurity programs with the technology having been proven in laboratory tests in the Netherlands to be effective against African swine fever virus," Dr Richcards said.

"African swine fever is a contagious viral disease of domestic and wild pigs.

"There is no vaccine and it kills about 80 percent of the pigs it infects.

"On December 11, 2019 the federal government announced $66.6 million of funding to address the immediate threat of the disease, which has recently been reported as close as Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste."

Apiam had been using its current supply of Z-71 Microbe Shield to sanitise its own offices and veterinary hospitals around the country.

"Veterinary practices are seen as essential services and we ensure ours are as safe as possible for our staff and clients," Dr Richards said.

There has been strong demand from both Apiam clients and the greater community for the use of its products, and Apiam provided 'fogging' services where requested to assist other essential businesses and workplaces improve their biosecurity and hygiene systems.

Apiam Animal Health stocks Z-71 Microbe Shield, and expects additional supplies of both Z-71 Microbe Shield and Zoono's hand sanitiser in the coming weeks, which will be available through Apiam clinics and the countryvet.com.au website.

Apiam animal health

US shortages in times of plenty

BOTH large and small, about 800 federally regulated meat-processing facilities provide 98 percent of the US meat packing capacity.

April 2020 dealt several devastating blows to the country's meat market, with Smithfield the largest pork integrator in the country announcing the indefinite closure of several major packing plants.

This loss is compounded by closures and decreased staffing of competitor plants owned by JBS and Tyson Foods.

The resulting facility bottleneck has resulted in about 25 percent decrease in cattle processing and six percent decrease in pork processing compared to the same time last year.

A recent study conducted by Iowa State University has indicated that the US market is heading for a $A7.6 billion loss, $A3 billion of that hitting the pork powerhouse state of Iowa.

The loss has been attributed to several factors, each as crippling as the previous.

Packer bottleneck

COVID-19 impact on plant shutdowns is beginning to ramp up.

While government officials urge US packers to find ways to remain open, the unfortunate reality is that social distancing is near impossible in modern processing facilities.

Additionally, due to a younger worker demographic, most individuals affected with the virus experienced mild symptoms, which resulted in them not staying home or seeking medical intervention.

Short staffing

US agriculture relies heavily on immigrant workers to aid in all aspects of agriculture, from crop production through to packaging.

Viral testing at Smithfield's South Dakota plant indicated the location was a viral hub, with over 16 percent of 3000 employees testing positive prior to the plant shutting down.

With illness, absenteeism, border closures and increased timing to acquire working visas, the lack of manpower has been the harsh reality agriculture industry is feeling across the board, which has made margins in pig production shrink further.

Supply and demand

With the bulk of food service and high-end retail stores closed for business, there has been a dramatic shift in the extent of carcass utilisation in the market.

Whereas retailers and restaurateurs preferred primal cuts, the more budget conscientious masses are interested in the cheaper options including poultry and ground meats.

Bacon and ham are typically the drivers for pork carcass prices in the US.

Bacon attributes about 70 percent of its sales to the commercial and restaurant industries.

The resulting impact has driven the average pork carcass value to drop as much as $A70.33 per head.

Unlike nonbiologic commercial goods, pig production runs on a continual timeline.

With packer capacity pushed to the limit and pork backing up in the supply chain, producers are facing severe losses.

If exports and domestic demand does not increase, the US could be looking at a drastically different producer demographic in 2021.

Dr Bri Fredrich
Apiam Animal Health
Swine Services

Z-71 MICROBE SHIELD

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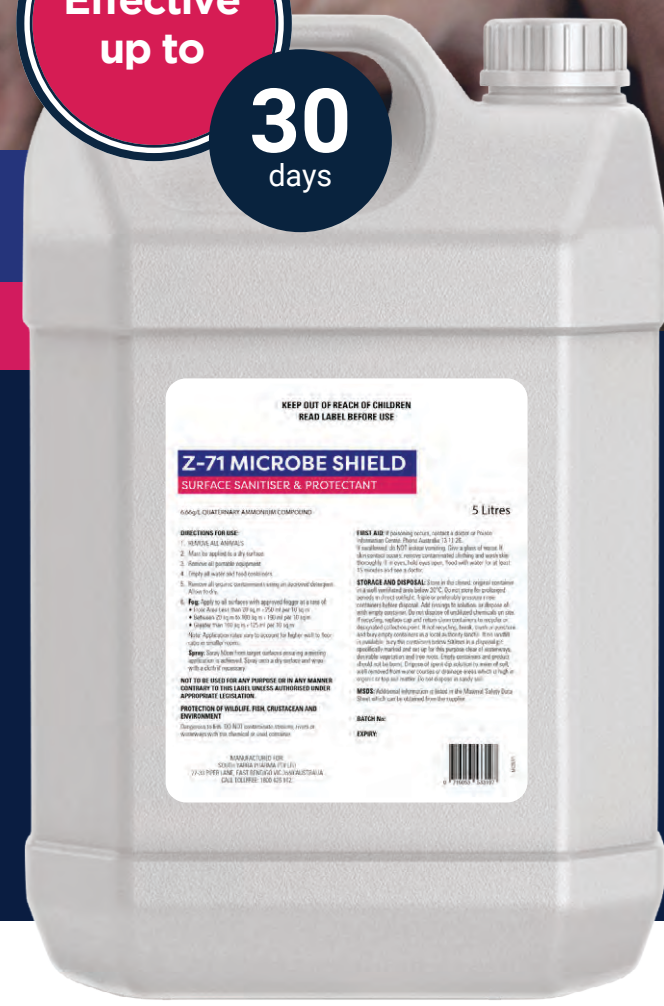
Effective up to 30 days



Z-71 is an effective surface sanitiser and protectant for all pig accommodation areas including farrowing sheds, nursery sheds, shelters' or 'straw-based' housing systems. Application of Z-71 Microbe Shield to other areas of the farm including office spaces, change rooms, high touch areas and vehicle cabins will provide long lasting pathogen protection and enhance farm biosecurity.

Why Choose Z-71 Microbe Shield?

Modern Technology

- Z-71 Microbe Shield is a new generation Quaternary Ammonium disinfectant.
- Z-71 Microbe Shield attaches to surfaces and offers protection against pathogens for up to 30 days*.
- Once attached to a surface, Z-71 Microbe Shield kills pathogens by a combination of mechanical and chemical actions.
- Fogging delivery ensures superior coverage of all surfaces. Spraying allows top-up on high traffic spots.

Broad Spectrum Activity

- Z-71 Microbe Shield is a broad-spectrum antimicrobial sanitiser demonstrated to be effective against bacterial, viral and fungal pathogens.
- Laboratory tests by Wangeningen University in the Netherlands has demonstrated Z-71 Microbe Shield to provide a 4.5 log reduction (99.99% reduction) against African Swine Fever virus in both clean surfaces and in the presence of low levels of organic matter.

Use and the Environment

Z-71 Microbe Shield is non-corrosive, non-leaching, clear, hypoallergenic and approved for food uses in many countries.

Fogging:

Fogging is a safe, simple and quick process. It is important to use a fogging device that is suitable for the area/s to be fogged. Apiam Animal Health can assist with the initial fogging process and training of farm staff on how to effectively fog facilities.

Appropriate fogging devices can be purchased through Apiam Animal Health.

Please contact us for further information.

Visit Zoonovet.com.au for product information or your Apiam Swine & Poultry team:
West Coast 08 9361 5550; East Coast 03 5445 5920

Z-71 Microbe Shield has been approved by the Australian Governments' Therapeutic Good Administration (TGA) for use against COVID-19, bacteria and germs on hard surfaces.

Chris Richards & Associates Swine Veterinary Consultants · PORTEC Veterinary Services · Country Vet animal supplies · Westvet Wholesale · Apiam DIRECT animal health · Apiam animal health

* Report on file. The information and recommendations set out in this brochure are no substitute for professional or expert advice and are based on tests and data believed to be reliable at the time of publication. Results may vary, as the use and application of the products is beyond our control and may be subject to climatic, geographical or biological variables, and/or developed resistance. To the maximum extent permitted by law, Apiam Animal Health Limited disclaims all warranties of any kind, whether express or implied, including but not limited to any warranty that the information is up-to-date, complete, true, legally compliant, accurate, non-misleading or suitable. **Zoono is a registered trademark of Zoono NZ.**

1800 426 142

World Veterinary Day safeguarding animal welfare and food production during COVID-19

IN recognition of World Veterinary Day on April 25, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment celebrated the vital contribution veterinarians make to Australian agriculture.

Australia's chief veterinary officer Dr Mark Schipp said World Veterinary Day was a time to recognise the longstanding dedication of this profession to safeguarding animal and human health.

"Australia's veterinarians improve the welfare of our animals, the productivity of our farms and the well-being of Australians," Dr Schipp said.

"Veterinarians fill a wide variety of essential roles from directly treating animals to undertaking research, disease surveillance and food safety inspection.

"They support agricultural trade by negotiating with trading partners and protecting our borders from biosecurity threats.

"Earlier this year our veterinarians stepped up in response to bushfires leading treatment of livestock and wildlife."

The continuing work of veterinarians has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, including veterinarians involved in research.

"The Australian government recently announced a $230 million funding boost for CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, formerly known as the Australian Animal Health Laboratory," Dr Schipp said.

"The funding will assist veterinarians and other scientists in efforts to develop a human vaccine against COVID-19.

"It will also support their continued work in identifying, preventing and responding to the increasing threat of diseases, including those spreading from animals to humans."

The first stage of testing potential vaccines against COVID-19 has already commenced.

Veterinarians, in conjunction with the Australian Veterinary Association, have played an important role in providing clear information about COVID-19 virus to owners of pets and other animals in Australia.

"All our lives have been impacted by COVID-19, however maintaining animal welfare and food production amidst COVID-19 disruptions is critical and important to all Australians," Dr Schipp said.

"The continued dedication of veterinarians has ensured that animals have been protected, and the world-leading reputation of Australia's food production system remains as strong as ever."

The spread of the COVID-19 virus is being driven by person-to-person contact.

There is no evidence that people can catch COVID-19 virus from their animals.

To find out about the important work CSIRO undertakes, visit csiro.au

Meat process plant reduces odours with safe aeration technology

A MEAT process plant needed aeration to reduce odours associated with its wastewater treatment system.

The plant had a large 350,000-litre tank with in-flows exceeding four megalitres per day.

The owners also wanted a system that was easy to maintain and safe for operators.

Engineers at the plant selected a venturi-aeration system that consisted of two VA-1100 (6") venturi-aerators, powered by two Gorman-Rupp pump model V6A60-B pumps with a combined discharge rate of 140 litres per second.

The Gorman-Rupp pumps draw the wastewater from the tank and discharge it at pressure into the venturi-aerators.

Air is drawn into the aerator at a ratio 2.2 times the pump flow, where it is mixed with the wastewater.

Water is then discharged back into the tank, where 'hydraulic sheer' facilitates the release of soluble gasses and volatiles from the water, which is now saturated with dissolved oxygen.

The discharge ports of the two aerators were set up tangential to the side wall to induce a 'spin' to the contents of the tank, causing solids to migrate to the centre where the pump suction lines were positioned.

This way, large solids are collected and smashed through the pump and aerator, reducing their size and making them more available for biological reaction.

The plant has found the system very easy to access for monitoring and maintenance because it is located outside the tank (not in it or on it).

Therefore no lifting apparatus is needed to access equipment, and there is no 'working over water' or 'working at heights' to contend with or write up on risk-assessment documents.

Hydro Innovations regional manager Shaun Allgood visited the plant and noted everything had been installed and was functioning perfectly.

A spokesperson from the plant said they had no problems at all with the system.

Shaun will continue to stay updated on this project and provide assistance when needed.

Smaller projects are possible with the use of smaller venturi-aerators, which are available in 50mm, 80mm, 100mm and 150mm sizes.

Larger projects are approached by using multiples of the larger unit, sometimes using a dedicated large pump to 'drive' two, three or even four venturi-aerators.

More information can be obtained by emailing info@hydroinnovations.com.au

Coronavirus disaster emergency plan for Australian pork producers

Movement restrictions

In the event of movements being restricted from farm to farm:

All pigs would be sent straight to slaughter when up to weight or sent lighter if space and welfare are being compromised.

Particularly hospital/compromised pigs should be slaughtered as soon as economically possible.

In the event of all movements being restricted including for slaughter (slaughterhouse closure):

Inside

Weaners can be double or triple stocked to 20kg and then split down.

Growers can be double stocked to 60kg.

Note extra feeders may be required.

Outside

Temporary accommodation can be created outside using straw bales and wooden palates.

The pens will need temporary drinkers fitted and ad-lib feeders.

Breeding

Ensure the breeding farm can collect semen from any entire boar on farm.

Feed

Number each feed bin.

Have a clear map detailing which feed bin feeds which pigs.

Ensure staff understands the map.

Ensure enough feed on the farm to supply five days feed to the pigs on the unit.

Order extra if required.

Have sufficient bagged feed for at least three days supply.

Wet fed farms can be a particular problem in a disaster.

Water

What provisions are there if the main supply fails.

Is there a borehole supply?

Slurry and dirty water

Ensure there is enough slurry storage for at least six months on the unit.

Create a clear map of the farm slurry emptying system.

Bedding and cleanliness

If bedding is used on the farm, ensure there is six months supply.

It is important all pigs can be kept clean and well bedded if restrictions are in place.

Staff

All staff should wash their hands for minimum 20 seconds with soap, water and a nailbrush.

Practice social distancing.

If staff feels sick they should report to the manager.

All staff should be aware of the minimum required in each area so they can accommodate at least one week of care of the pigs.

If people are in short supply cleaning can be stopped for two weeks.

The building can be dry-cleaned to remove faeces.

Basic processing can be stopped.

Note staff that has been ill, once recovered will be essential staff as they are immune to the virus.

These staff must understand the essential basics.

There is going to be mass unemployment, is this an opportunity for others to enjoy the privilege of working with pigs.

Paperwork

Minimise all physical paperwork.

Use cloud document storage facilities.

Medication

Carry two months supply of medicines.

Fuel

If possible ensure a minimum of two weeks storage of the fuel for all farm machinery and equipment.

Note: pigs do not get COVID-19, this is a human disaster.

John Carr

Checklist to protect yourself and the farm		
Entry to farm		Wash hands with soap, water and a nailbrush.
		Keep 1.5m apart from another person, if possible.
		Stop shaking hands and hugging.
Shower facilities		Ensure showers are clean.
		Ensure abundant supply of warm water.
		Ensure abundant supply of soap and shampoo.
		Do not share towels.
		Wash all towels after use.
		Clearly identify and use a 'disinfect' clothes hampers.
		Ensure toilets are kept clean at all times.
		Ensure sinks are kept clean at all times.
Kitchen and office		Keep all surfaces clean.
		Wipe and disinfect all surfaces regularly.
		Have sole-use personal cup, plate and eating utensils.
		Ensure kitchen wear is cleaned and disinfected before use.
		Stagger break and dinner times for small groups rather than whole team at one time.
On-farm (and in your home)		Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily:
		Light switches – with care
		Toilet
		Sinks
		Doorknobs
		Tables
		Chairs
Coughing		Only cough into your hand or sleeve.
		Never spit in public.
		After coughing / sneezing wash hands thoroughly and dispose of tissue immediately – use of handkerchiefs is not advised.
If you are sick		Do not go to work.
		Discuss with farm manager and medical professional.
		A loss taste and smell senses in the early stages in many cases.

Coronaviruses can be killed – they are easy to kill and do not live long in the environment.

Al Dahra Australia's new plant at Wannamal, WA, will be able to deliver a range of bale sizes and packing and wrapping styles for its export customers.

Al Dahra Australia lifts export hay output in Western Australia

HAY exporter Al Dahra Australia will invest $10 million in a hi-tech production line and press at its Western Australian facility at Wannamal, 100km north of Perth.

The South Australian manufactured Schutz hay processing plant system, complemented by the latest Torque Industries hydraulics and electrical package, will produce 80,000 tonnes per annum of high-quality export hay and straw for Al Dahra's global markets, including the Middle East, Japan, China, Taiwan and Korea.

Al Dahra general manager Keith Coakley said the plant would operate from December.

"The new plant will triple our capacity and lift packaging quality to the highest possible level, giving our valued customers more options in terms of bale size, and packing and wrapping styles.

"The expansion of Al Dahra's initial 2016 footprint in Western Australia signals our intent to build bigger, better and more sustainable business relationships with more growers, and to grow market share potentially via strategic acquisitions, subject to due diligence stacking up.

"With our focus on quality and commitment to supply a world-class, quality-assured product to our customers, we rely on a select pool of equally committed WA growers, who we regard as aligning with the best in the world.

"We anticipate 2020 will see excellent returns for growers, with strong demand for hay and straw to meet an increasing need for highly nutritious livestock feed, in order to satisfy the world's expanding protein requirements.

"Exporters have very little carryover stocks from last year, which featured low yields but high quality," Mr Coakley said.

Al Dahra is a prominent multinational leader in agribusiness, specialising in the cultivation, production and trading of animal feed, essential food commodities and end-to-end supply chain management.

Serving a large customer base in government and commercial sectors, Al Dahra has a large geographic footprint, with a workforce of 5000 in more than 20 countries and catering to more than 45 markets, with a leading position in Asia and the Middle East.

The group manages and operates a land bank in excess of 160,000 hectares, with 1200 pivots.

In addition, the company owns and manages 15 state-of-the-art forage processing and baling facilities, and can produce and supply three million tonnes of alfalfa and grasses annually, catering to the needs of livestock producers around the world.

Al Dahra is a world leader in the production, packaging, marketing and distribution of grains – operating two flour and three rice mills – with capacity to annually produce 500,000 tonnes of flour and 500,000 tonnes of rice.

Strategically located at the Fujairah port in the United Arab Emirates, the company owns and operates a grains hub, with 20 silos and a storage capacity of more than 300,000 tonnes.

Al Dahra has made considerable investments in the logistics and supply chain sector, moving about two million tonnes annually and shipping 175,000 twenty-foot equivalent units.

In 2019 Al Dahra's share of the global fodder trade was 16 percent.

By the end of 2020 it anticipates growing that share to 20 percent.

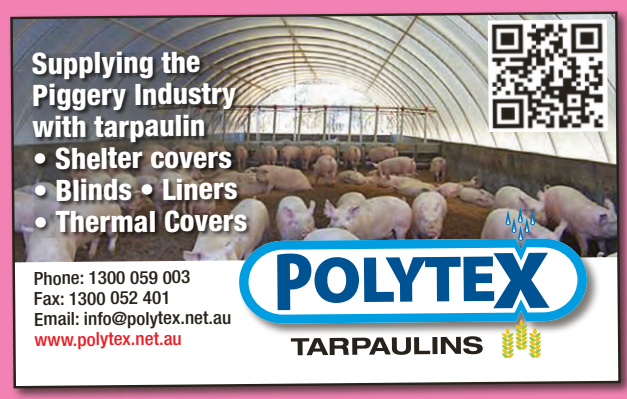
For more information, visit aldahra.com

Al Dahra CEO Hussain Al Katheeri (left) and CFO Gianlucca Fabbri (right) recently visited the company's Western Australian site at Wannamal and met with Al Dahra Australia GM Keith Coakley.

Here's my Card

THIS is a quick and easy way to locate the right people for any number of specialist services and facilities in the pig industry.

Whatever the job you need to accomplish, here's a group of business cards that guarantee you the best available.



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■ Letters to the Editor ■ Letters to the Editor ■

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NEW cases of African swine fever in Poland are due to spreading from farm to farm.

With one or two exceptions most of the African swine fever cases in Europe have occurred in wild boar and in small backyard farms readily accessed by wild boar.

On April 6, an outbreak of African swine fever was confirmed on a farm in Poland with 10,000 fattening pigs, which is outside the area where ASF has been occurring in wild boar.

The farm is owned by Smithfield – the Chinese-owned US company.

The source of the infection was a group of ASF positive pigs shipped in mid-March from an infected sow farm.

It is likely the affected pigs were about 14- to 15-weeks old and had been incubating infection for at least two weeks.

How did this happen?

In 2013, the European Union commissioned a risk analysis for ASF.

They found Romania and Poland had a high risk because of the number of small farms with poor biosecurity.

Spain was high risk because of the number of workers from countries with ASF.

Spain, Romania and Poland were also high risk because of wild boar habitation.

The UK, France and Italy were high risk because of tourism.

The analysis showed that if there were no farms with poor biosecurity, the risk to EU member states was very low to negligible.

On March 23, a 7000-sow farm within the Smithfield Polish business broke with ASF.

The farm was in an area where there are many wild boar, and the ASF infection rate in wild boar in this area had been increasing over the past few months.

There have been 1600 wild boar cases in Poland in 2020, only 600 fewer than 2019.

According to reports from Wojciech Kosc and Michael Standaert, while the government recruited hunting clubs to assist in the control of wild boar, these associations are regularly accused of disregarding safety measures and helping rather than curbing the spread of the disease.

In early 2020, private broadcaster TVN24 allegedly exposed the lax biosecurity measures of one of the hunting associations, prompting a criminal investigation.

This all indicates Smithfield farms are in a high-risk area.

You would expect a company like Smithfield to run a tight ship.

Possibly but there are many elements to biosecurity.

It looks very much like Smithfield introduced the pigs from an infected farm in March though before the disease was diagnosed.

The pigs looked quite OK when they arrived apparently – at about 30kg live weight at the fattening site and for about two weeks.

Several would have died at the new site but the disease moves slowly and it can take three weeks before the ASF mortality rate can be seen in farm data.

Further, in the early stages the disease can look like any other cause of sudden death in growing pigs and is easily confused with erysipelas, actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae, Strep suis and Glassers disease – if nobody looked too hard.

There are many unknowns in this case.

Was the original 7000-sow farm secure – were there gaps in the fence or under the gates a wild boar could have squeezed through in search of food or sex?

Were there hunting enthusiasts among the staff members or the manager?

Was staff regularly trained in disease detection and was personnel biosecurity enforced?

Were records maintained?

How often did vets visit and did they post-mortem dead pigs?

Was there a clean and dirty demarcation line at the farm perimeter?

Australia has a feral pig population that dwarfs the domestic herd.

On Australian farms over the last decade there have been numerous stories of feral pigs feeding at silo spills and looking to get into a sow house.

While many of our excellent workers are from countries where ASF is present there is often high staff turnover, hence farming business can always do more disease recognition and awareness training.

Many farming businesses are so focussed on personnel down-time between farm visits or leave they forget about the hole in the fence, to make sure the transport tray or other equipment has been cleaned and disinfected or that there is a biosecurity protocol in place for the driver.

ASF is in Timor, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

Australia's pork industry has had at least 18 months warning since the disease arrived in China and six months from East Timor's declaration of infection.

There are a number of biosecurity protocols available.

Disease control methodology is well established and there are more veterinarians skilled in pig medicine than ever before.

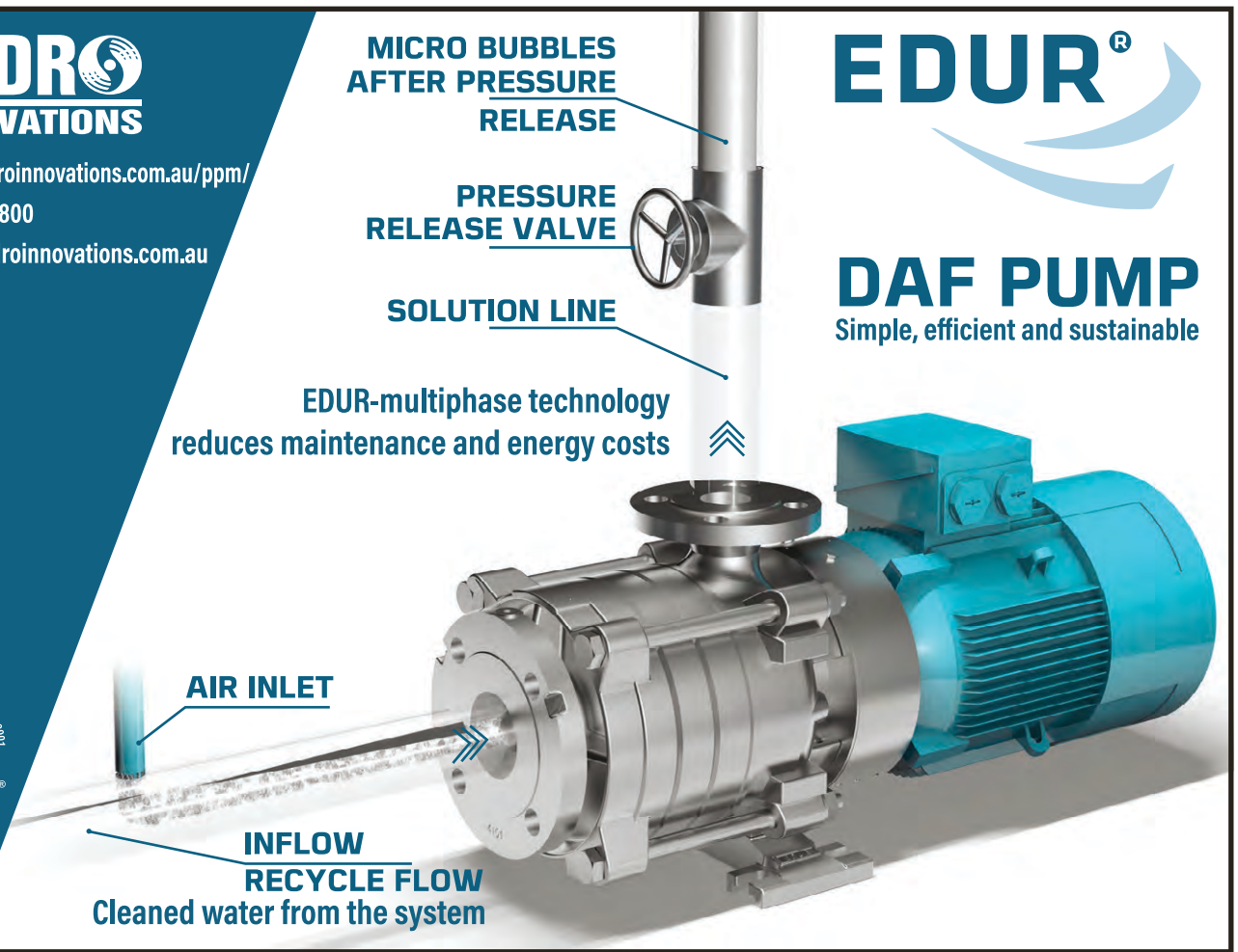
The Polish cases should cause pork production businesses in their boardrooms, farm offices, conference rooms, lunchrooms and around the kitchen table to review once more their African swine fever disease prevention procedures.

Biosecurity is an animal health and commercial imperative.

It needs to be business as usual and part of every piggery's workplace culture.

Ross Cutler

The author is chair of the Australian Pork Limited ASF industry technical group.



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