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Improving the health and welfare of pigs is of paramount importance to all of those involved in the industry in England. It affects our cost of production, our ability to compete in a highly competitive EU market, our impact on the environment, the safety of the food we produce, our responsibility to the animals in our care, our reputation as a producer of high welfare pork, bacon, ham and other pork products and ultimately our ability to produce a secure supply of food in an increasingly volatile world.

We have made considerable progress since the first Pig Health and Welfare strategy was launched at the end of 2003. For example, evidence from the BPEX Pig Health Scheme is that pig health is improving, with reductions of around 20% in the prevalence of enzootic pneumonia-like lesions and of pleurisy since the launch.

Sales of antimicrobial products for use in pigs have also declined by around 20% between 2003 and 2009. Overall, the performance indicators for the industry, reflecting both health and welfare have recovered in recent years.

The time is now right to move to the next stage and build on the progress we have made. Through the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy we aim to address the new challenges that a changing world is putting before us.

Despite the progress we have made we remain behind many of our immediate competitors on key measures of efficiency. Improving pig health is key to closing this competitiveness gap. The threat from exotic and endemic disease is ever present and requires constant vigilance. Enhancing biosecurity at farm and national level is the most effective way to reduce the risk of incursion and spread.

Producing safe food has always been, and will continue to be, a priority for the industry. The EU is currently preparing targets for reductions in salmonella that will become a target for action. We have seen a reduction in the use of antimicrobials and have identified that we need to reduce this further.

We have a reputation built on high welfare production but it has been a struggle to achieve a price premium in our own market. New techniques will enable us to assess the real welfare of the pigs in our care and not just perceptions based on the production systems we use.

Climate change and the growing world population mean that we need to produce our product while minimising the impact on the environment. We have done a lot but there is more to achieve, particularly if we can get health right. Pork and pork products are the country’s most popular meat and the implementation of this strategy will help to maintain security of supply. Improving collaboration and co-ordination is a key theme throughout the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy. The pilot regional Pig Health Programmes give encouragement that producers can work together for mutual benefit. We will harness this enthusiasm for co-ordinated investment despite the economic challenges that the industry faces.

Of equal importance is co-ordinating the activities of diverse organisations that have a common goal of improving pig health and welfare and the range of benefits that brings. These include, among others, the allied industry, welfare groups and Government. We will also work closely with the pig industry in Scotland and Wales on common issues and threats.

The 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy sets down in its Vision a clear goal which everyone involved in the industry can easily understand and contribute towards achieving continuous improvement in pig health and welfare.

The strategy outlines how the philosophy of continuous improvement can be achieved in the priority areas for action that are key to delivering our objectives, which can only be achieved through working together. The Pig Health and Welfare Council will publish the baseline for 2011 against which progress will be measured. The Council will review baseline prevalences, develop targets, monitor, review and revise interim targets where appropriate.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to developing the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy. It is only by a similar collaborative effort that this strategy will deliver a sustainable industry that will benefit producers, processors, the wider industry and the public.

Stewart Houston
CBE, FRAgS, Chairman BPEX
Vision

An English pig herd where health and welfare are continually improving, which results in better pig performance, the production of a safe and quality product, reduced environmental impact and increasing sustainability of an industry that contributes fully to national food security.
Objectives

The main objectives of the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy for England are to:

- Support pig producers in delivering their objectives for continual improvements in pig health and pig welfare
- Eliminate or control significant enzootic pig diseases locally, regionally and nationally
- Eliminate or control significant infections of food safety and public health concern (e.g. Salmonella)
- Develop and promote new knowledge on the assessment of welfare outcomes
- Promote the open exchange of information on the disease status for herds and regions
- Promote and encourage responsible and appropriate use of antimicrobials
- Maintain freedom from notifiable exotic and emerging diseases of pigs
- Deliver an integrated approach to improving pig health and welfare with all stakeholders, allied support industries, retailers, foodservice and Government

One of the strategy’s key objectives is to deliver an integrated approach to improving pig health and welfare. This can only be achieved if the whole industry works together at every stage of production.
Delivering our Objectives

Pig Health

The Pig Health Improvement Project is the core of the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy for England.

We will

- Help producers to form groups and to work together on health improvement. The programme (www.pighealth.org.uk) started in 2009 with pilots in three areas: Yorkshire and the Humber (YHH), East of England (EPH) and East Midlands (EMPH). There has been a very high level of buy-in to the concept of collaborative disease management and mitigation across the whole sector – producers, vets, abattoirs, feed companies and pig marketing groups.

- Help these producers share information on the complete health status of the pigs on their unit.

- Map the location of units, their health and biosecurity status and movements in order to control enzootic and exotic diseases.

The Pig Health Improvement Project is attempting to change completely the way endemic pig diseases are managed, mitigated and controlled across the country.

This will require a radical change in the mindset of all involved - from a rather singular, self-contained approach to a far more inclusive, co-ordinated and collaborative one, which takes into account the interactions between producers themselves and other members of the production and marketing chain.

This will enable pig producers to work together to eliminate key pig diseases locally, regionally and nationally – where this is feasible – and to control disease everywhere. It will make a significant contribution to improving pig welfare, reducing environmental impact, making pig production more sustainable and secure and supporting food safety and public health.

The Pig Health Improvement Project recognises the health status of a particular pig herd is the result of the interaction and transmission of disease agents within and between herds. Infectious diseases can be transmitted between herds via aerosol, pig movement, vehicles, birds, insects and rodents. Individual efforts to control the transmission of infectious disease often result in failure because of subsequent re-infection and breakdown.

This probability can be reduced by a more co-ordinated approach between producers with the support of their veterinary surgeons. The programme aims to encourage inter-producer collaboration and communication between producers and the rest of the supply chain.

The barriers to health improvement on pig farms are not technical – the diagnostics and elimination strategies required to make progress are readily available and well described. The challenge is the ‘human factor’. There is a clear need for coordinated action on and between pig farms.
Welfare

Welfare outcomes focus on how well the pigs’ needs are being met and not just the production system in which they are kept.

There will continue to be a focus on finding solutions to tail biting, tail docking, teeth clipping, freedom around farrowing and the husbandry of entire males at weights above 80kg liveweight to make further progress on improving pig welfare. Research must continue on how to reduce the incidence of tail biting, recognising that in the interim tail docking should be used appropriately to protect pig welfare.

Higher welfare systems often have higher costs of production, though there can also be production benefits (e.g., through lower mortality and vet costs). While industry aims to meet this overall cost the supply chain needs to function more effectively in ensuring that farmers receive a share of the welfare premium that makes these systems sustainable.

We will

- Evaluate a system of measuring welfare outcomes on farm by 2012 and then work with farm assurance schemes on incorporation into Standards. Use to earn recognition for progress made and to provide a clear focus on ongoing improvement.

- Achieve progress in improving pig welfare that is not at the expense of deterioration in other areas, e.g., production costs that are unsustainable; reductions in tail docking should not be at the expense of an increase in pigs that are tail bitten.

- Promote high welfare standards to consumers and work with retailers to create a virtuous cycle of investment and reward that should become the driver of progress in improving pig welfare.

Food Safety and Public Health

High standards of pig health and welfare help to protect food safety and public health, which helps to build consumer trust in pigmeat products.

Risk reduction strategies for the control of zoonoses, the animal diseases that can be transmitted to humans, should be applied throughout the pigmeat production chain supported by the appropriate cost-benefit analysis to identify key areas for investment of time and resources.

There can be tension between welfare and public health objectives in that some approaches to improving animal welfare, e.g., bedded solid floors, may increase zoonotic risk. There can, however, be some win/win situations, e.g., improved welfare can reduce stress which can result in better immunity and, therefore, reduce the number of carriers of zoonotic bacterial infections.

We will

- Co-ordinate the industry and engage with Government in developing an agreed National Control Programme for salmonella in pigs that is approved by the European Commission for introduction in 2013. The programme will aim to meet the European Commission target for salmonella by the specified deadline.
Surveillance

Notifiable and emerging diseases must be detected as soon as possible to maintain freedom from these diseases of pigs.

The prevalence of notifiable disease worldwide is at a very high level, which, together with increasing reports of highly pathogenic PRRS virus outbreaks in Asia, makes maintaining the UK’s current health status an overriding priority. A robust surveillance mechanism is required along with accurate and prompt diagnostic resources for exotic disease. Reliable information on enzootic disease status on-farm is critical for health planning and management. Development of a representative and robust picture of the structure of the industry will support surveillance activities aimed at disease detection and control.

We will

- Establish robust mechanisms for routine monitoring of the prevalence of key endemic diseases and baseline national health status, including engagement with smallholders and non-commercial pig keepers by the end of 2012.

- Generate a national pig herd register that maps active pig units and provides real-time knowledge of pig movements by the end of 2012.

- Develop robust population data to act as a baseline against which to (i) measure targets and changes in disease prevalence and (ii) ensure prompt and targeted intervention in the event of local, regional or national outbreaks requiring a co-ordinated response to control.

- Ensure the reporting of reliable information on carcase lesions post-slaughter. The BPEX Pig Health Scheme (BPHS) will continue until at least 2013, while efforts are made to enhance the quality of health information collected through meat inspection.

- Develop risk-based industry standard protocols for health assessment of imported stock to minimise introduction of novel and emerging diseases by the end of 2012.

- Work to retain the intellectual capability of rapid investigation of novel syndromes of disease, ensure ease of access to cost-efficient diagnostic testing and support development of non-invasive diagnostic testing and techniques for the assessment of pathogenic virulence.
**Biosecurity**

Preventing the introduction of disease is critical to the success of any health strategy.

There will be an equal focus on preventing the spread of disease from pig farm to pig farm. Pig producers should be rewarded for ‘good stewardship through biosecurity improvements’, as in other sectors of agriculture, through support schemes. The risk posed by vehicles involved in pig transport is well recognised as an area that needs specific attention.

**We will**

- Establish robust mechanisms for routinely evaluating and scoring biosecurity practices and baseline national biosecurity status on pig farms by the end of 2012. Biosecurity on pig farms would be scored routinely thereafter on an annual or more frequent basis, depending on risk to the holding, to other pig farms and where appropriate, to wider society.

- Develop a mechanism for recognising that high standards of biosecurity demonstrate good stewardship by the end of 2013.

- Ensure that compliance with biosecurity standards will be a condition of participation in the Health Improvement Programme.

- Develop appropriate standards as a mechanism for recognising best practice for lorry washing by the end of 2011. Work with hauliers, transport assurance, British Quality Assured Pork and abattoirs to improve facilities available for lorry washes.

- Work with Government and its agencies to ensure that the risk of incursion of exotic disease is minimised.

**Facilities and Infrastructure**

The quality of buildings and the environment in which pigs are kept can directly and indirectly affect health and welfare.

Maintenance, upgrading and replacement of buildings and facilities should be encouraged through a supportive framework for knowledge transfer and investment.

**We will**

- Facilitate and encourage investment in new pig facilities that reduce the environmental footprint and improve welfare through industry Knowledge Transfer activity.
**Medicines**

Responsible use of medicines is an essential element of protecting pig health and welfare

It is important that the range of products available and the development of new products are not unnecessarily restricted by the regulatory framework. Delays to the development of new vaccines would be a particular concern.

The use of antimicrobials should be effective and efficient but reductions in usage should not be at the expense of increased levels of disease on farm or of lesions at slaughter.

The pig industry has worked closely with the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA, www.ruma.org.uk) to develop and promote guidelines on the responsible use of antimicrobials in pig production. The guidelines are regularly revised to incorporate the latest concepts in best practice.

**We will**

- Agree a mechanism with Government for monitoring antimicrobial resistance patterns in animals and humans by 2013 and aim for a reduction of resistance by 2020.
- Through improving pig health and disease control and elimination, aim to reduce overall usage of antimicrobials in pigs by 2020.
- Support Government in calling for a review at EU level of the current process for registration of medicines, with a view to streamlining the requirements and reducing the barriers to investment and development.

**Research**

Investment in research should focus on the areas that would yield the most cost-effective and important or significant improvements in health and welfare

Comprehensive reviews of published and ongoing research, GAP analysis, prioritisation and cost/benefit projections will guide the investment in research on health and welfare.

The Taylor review on scientific research in agriculture strongly linked weak productivity gains to both reduction in R&D investment and the demise of public extension services.

It also identified research to improve livestock management and breakthroughs in genetics as critical if farmers are to increase production on less land using fewer resources, while adapting to and mitigating climate change.

The ambitious Pig Health Improvement Programme will throw up challenges that research can help to address with ultimate benefits to pig health and welfare.

**We will**

- Review health and welfare research with a view to setting out a roadmap by the end of 2012 for research in this area from 2013 to 2020.
- Encourage relevant industry partners to explore the potential value of an Animal Health Research and Technology Club with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) that would seek to exploit recent advances in genetics and genomics for the advancement of pig health and welfare between 2011 and 2016.
- Support research on non-invasive diagnostic testing eg saliva analysis, for groups of pigs, colostrum, etc.
Knowledge Transfer

Research and development effort needs to be put into practice and advantage should also be taken of advances in international research to make the most rapid progress in improving health and welfare at all stages of life.

BPEX and its training partners will expand the opportunities available for the training of managers and stock workers in areas relevant to protection and improvement of pig health and welfare that meet the exacting standards of the Pig Industry Professional Register.

Husbandry and nutrition modulate disease impact and facilitate the immune response. The impact of improving performance on health and welfare should be monitored so that action can be taken promptly to minimise the risk of adverse outcomes, eg growth rates and lameness; increased prolificacy and pre-weaning mortality.

We will

• Develop training modules specific to the Health Improvement Project that will be available from 2012 and expanded thereafter on the basis of needs identified by a training subgroup.

• Maintain awareness of international advances in research, nutrition, micro-nutrition and husbandry and develop effective mechanisms for promoting rapid uptake.

• Promote and encourage detailed and accurate farm recording and exchange of information.

• Encourage “first-adopter” farms in the Pig Health Improvement Project to act as a network of demonstration farms. This will allow new techniques, products and technologies to be tried, tested and improvements in health and welfare to be showcased. The target is to have two demonstration farms in each participating region by 2015.

Integrated Approach

Improving collaboration and co-ordination is key to the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy.

The pilots for the Pig Health Improvement Programme have demonstrated the value of working together for mutual benefit.

The challenge will be to co-ordinate the activities of the broad range of people and organisations that have the common goal of improving pig health and welfare.

The 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy will also be important in the implementation of the industry plan to reduce the environmental impact of pig production (Advancing Together - a Roadmap for the English Pig Industry).

There can be tension between the approaches needed to maximise health, welfare, food safety and public health, environment and sustainability, with producers left to struggle with conflicting objectives. Planning for pig health and welfare must be integrated into farm-level planning.

Farm Health and Welfare Planning should be part of environmental protection, sustainability and food security; and should embed forward planning and risk management in the avoidance of health challenges.

We will

• Address issues of co-ordination and integration in annual reviews of progress towards the objectives and targets of the strategy.

• Ensure that where the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy, other industry initiatives and Defra’s Structural Reform Priorities (Defra Business Plan 2011-2015) are aligned, then activity can be integrated for mutual benefit.
Working Together

An Integrated Approach to Delivery

The BPEX Two Tonne Sow (2TS) Campaign, launched early in 2010, established a single performance target towards which the whole of the pig industry can work collectively.

The 2TS Campaign aims to help producers achieve an industry-wide average of 2,000kg of pigmeat per sow by 2013. Improvements in pig health are central to achieving these improvements in pig performance.

The industry has set itself ambitious targets to reduce the environmental impact of pig production in four key areas - climate change, eutrophication, acidification and abiotic resource depletion. Improvements in pig health that facilitate more efficient performance can make a major contribution to Advancing Together - a Roadmap for the English Pig Industry, Towards Better Performance.

This Roadmap is clear testimony to BPEX’s belief that the pig industry is on course to provide high quality food in a way that is sustainable in the long term, adheres to the highest standards of animal health and welfare and continues to meet consumer aspirations for a healthy protein.

The basic principles of good biosecurity, good hygiene and good management are common both to improving pig health and welfare and reducing food safety risks. There will be strong synergies with the National Control Programme for Salmonella in Pigs and opportunities to make sustainable progress in achieving the objectives of the Health and Welfare strategy while reducing the risk of Salmonella in pigs.
Defra’s Structural Reform Priorities:

1 Support and develop British farming and encourage sustainable food production

Successful delivery of the Pig Health and Welfare strategy fits well with this priority. It will enhance the competitiveness and resilience of the pigmeat supply chain and help farmers to ensure a secure, environmentally sustainable and safe supply of food, with improved standards of animal welfare which will help build on existing unique selling points.

2 Help to enhance the environment and biodiversity to improve quality of life

Successful delivery of the Pig Health and Welfare strategy can make a major contribution to reducing the environmental impact of pigmeat consumed in the UK through improved performance efficiency and less wastage and mortality associated with disease.

3 Support a strong and sustainable green economy, resilient to climate change

The successful delivery of the Pig Health and Welfare strategy will play its part in creating the conditions in which pig farms can innovate, invest and grow. Central to the Pig Health Improvement Programme is encouragement to businesses, people and communities to work together to manage and use natural resources sustainably and to reduce waste through mitigation of diseases in pigs.

Encouraging groups of pig farmers to work together should help to create a shared communal response that can flow across into other areas and enhance rural communities.

Other major priorities from the Defra Business Plan 2011-2015 include being prepared for and to manage risk from animal and plant disease. The pig industry is very aware of the risks posed by animal disease to the environment, society and the economy. The Pig Health and Welfare strategy will enable Government, farmers and the wider industry to work together on the range of controls, surveillance and horizon-scanning activities that are necessary to understand the risks and maintain proportionate management responses.

The responsibilities of Defra’s Animal Health and Welfare Board for England include:

- Setting the strategic policy priorities
- Development of key policies and how they should be funded
- Assessing the risk of threats from animal disease and how to manage them
- Determining the surveillance and research priorities
- Reviewing and developing contingency plans for dealing with new disease outbreaks
- Considering what, if any, charging mechanisms should be introduced.

In developing the vision and preparing the way for 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy the industry has demonstrated responsibility and shows that it is prepared to bear a fair share of the costs in improving the health and welfare of pigs. The Pig Health and Welfare Council would engage proactively with the Animal Health and Welfare Board to improve and enhance health and welfare within the pig sector.
What We Aim to Achieve and by When

Targets
It is important that the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare Strategy has clear targets which the industry believes are sustainable and achievable. Key to setting credible targets is establishing the current performance baseline. The Pig Health and Welfare Council will establish by the end of 2012 the baseline against which progress in meeting the targets will be measured. Outcome targets will be agreed for reductions in the impact and/or prevalence of disease and for pig welfare and food safety standards. The process for measuring progress in meeting the outcome targets will be described.

2020 Outcome targets
The key areas for which targets will be developed in the 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare Strategy are:

Disease elimination
- Disease elimination – Swine Dysentery, Mange (or 90% reduction in incidence).

Disease impact reduction
- Reduce usage of antimicrobials as measured by mg active/kg pigmeat.
- Reduce levels of pre-weaning mortality and post-weaning mortality.
- Reduce levels of condemned pigmeat as measured by kg/pig in abattoirs.
- Reduce levels of post-mortem lesions reported in BPHS.

Welfare outcomes
- Reduce damage to pig tails.
- Examine the welfare and production impacts of piglet teeth clipping and feasible ranges for reduction by 2013.
- Reduce the incidence of lameness.
- Improvements in the farrowing environment.

Supply Chain
- Work within the supply chain to increase the numbers of producers being paid a premium for adopting higher welfare systems.

Food safety
- Maintain freedom from Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- Meet EU targets for reduction of Salmonella in pigmeat.

Environment
- To make a real contribution to achieving the environmental targets in *Advancing Together - a Roadmap for the English Pig Industry, Towards Better Performance*. 

Resources

20:20 Pig Health and Welfare will be led by BPEX, using levy resources. To succeed we will seek to co-ordinate and harness the resources already devoted to improving pig health and welfare in England. This includes producers, processors, allied industries, welfare groups, academics and Government. By acting in a more co-ordinated way, we believe that everybody will get a better return.

The Pig Health Improvement Programme is particularly ambitious and will require considerable resources over the coming years. English pig producers will need to provide the vast majority of the investment if this is to succeed.

There have already been successful pilot programmes that have shown that producers are willing to act collaboratively in order to improve pig health and welfare.

Many can see the benefit in theory of moving to the next stage but the risk of investment without a clear demonstration that this investment will yield a sufficient return is now greater than it was before the industry moved into a loss making position.

We will be looking to demonstrate that the Pig Health Improvement Programme can deliver lasting benefits to pig production businesses by seeking funding to stimulate uptake by early adopters. It is clear that if this particular programme and the strategy overall, is successful it will help to contribute towards the achievement of Government policy and the delivery of benefits to society as a whole through more environmentally sustainable, more secure and better welfare food production. We will therefore be exploring the availability of stimulus funding, in particular, from the Rural Development Programme for England.

Next Steps

In the coming months this 20:20 Pig Health and Welfare strategy will be discussed extensively with industry to secure their enthusiastic support. Once this is achieved, detailed business plans will be developed and start to be implemented for each of the priority areas.

The implementation of these business plans, which will be fully costed and have clear target outcomes, will be monitored by the Pig Health and Welfare Council. The Council will produce an annual review of progress in each of the priority areas.

Key Milestones for 2012

- Establish baselines for health and welfare outcomes
- Agree specific targets for 2020 health and welfare outcomes
- Extend Health Improvement Project to all of England
- Complete development of a system for measuring welfare outcomes
- Develop a National Control Programme for salmonella in pigs that is approved by the European Commission for introduction in 2013
- Establish robust mechanisms for routinely evaluating and scoring biosecurity practices on pig farms and establish baseline national biosecurity status on pig farms
- Review health and welfare research and agree a roadmap for research in this area from 2013 to 2020
- Develop accredited health and welfare training modules
- Review of progress towards the objectives and targets of the strategy.