

### Welfare Codes Focus: Tails

Routine tail docking is not permitted. The updated welfare code states that this 'should only be used as a last resort, after improvements to the pigs' environment and management have proved ineffectual in preventing tail biting'. It also states that 'owners/keepers should document evidence of tail biting and keep records of the measures instigated and their effectiveness on improving the pigs' welfare'.

Where the finishing herd is kept separately from the breeding herd, evidence must be supplied from nursery/finisher farms to the breeding herd of any tail biting that has occurred.

What does this mean practically? This means that nursery, finishing and breeding farms should be keeping records of any tail biting incidents, including the following details:

- Date this occurred
- Age/size of pig(s) affected
- The location/pen identification – so that if it reoccurs then areas such as ventilation can be investigated in more detail
- The suspected cause(s) of the tail biting – if this can be determined
- What action has been taken to try and resolve this – e.g. additional environmental enrichment provision, ventilation management changes, increased feed space provision, movement of pigs to a different pen, or the removal of any identified actively biting pigs
- How effective were the measures that were implemented

A useful resource for further information, as well as a template for recording this, is the AHDB Tail Biting WebHAT which can be found at <https://webhat.ahdb.org.uk/recording-tail-biting>.

Tail biting records will then be reviewed on a quarterly basis, alongside other information, before a written derogation from your veterinary surgeon can be given, where it is deemed necessary.

### 'Care 4 Pigs' Initiative Grant Available

Bayer Animal Health has collaborated with the Farm Animal Welfare Education Centre (FAWEC) and the Korean Association of Swine Veterinarians (KASV) to launch a global 'Care4Pigs' grant initiative. The grant offers 3 successful candidates the opportunity to receive €10,000 each to support innovative projects aimed at enhancing pig wellbeing.

The projects submitted should 'demonstrate innovative, practice-orientated ways to improve pig wellbeing at farm level'. Judging will look at how applicable the initiative is in different systems and production conditions, as well as the potential added value of the project to the farm. The project should either have already started or be underway by early 2021.

Submissions for the grant can come from farmers, farm staff, practicing vets, researchers and graduate students (in veterinary medicine, agriculture or animal sciences).

Grant applications must be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> June – please [click here](#) to view the Care4Pigs website for more details.

## Covid-19: Remote Quarterly Vet Visits and Red Tractor Assurance Visits

Some veterinary visits remain essential, despite Covid-19 restrictions, in order to continue to maintain both animal welfare and the food chain. It is also vital, however, that vets do not contribute to the spread of Covid-19 unnecessarily.

As a result, where there is not an urgent clinical issue and both parties agree it is appropriate, we are currently performing remote quarterly Red Tractor vet visits.

These remote visits require a collection of information in advance including:

- A scanned copy or photograph of the farm's medicine book since our last visit
- Sharing movement records using eAML (guidance on how to do this is available via AHDB Pork)
- Farm production data, unless we already have access to this

This is then followed by a telephone discussion at a pre arranged time regarding all areas of the farm, after which we are able to complete and sign the quarterly visit report remotely.

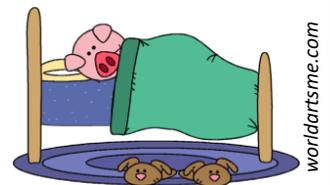
Currently there are no Red Tractor audits occurring in person. All audits are being carried out remotely in one of two formats:

- An entirely live streamed assessment over a video call, covering both the documentation and the farm itself.
- Paperwork being uploaded to an online portal in advance, followed by a visual assessment by video call. With this option the assessor will request to view specific areas or buildings on the farm.

So far the feedback on this new format has been generally positive, but many have advised allowing plenty of time to upload the necessary documentation to the portal and that poor internet quality on some sites can be problematic.

## Current Clinical Trends – What are we seeing out there?...

On some farms we are currently seeing an increase in rectal prolapses in finishers. Rectal prolapses are caused by an increase in abdominal pressure resulting in a breakdown of the muscles that hold and support the rectum within the pelvis.



There are various causes that include, but are not limited to, an increase in coughing, diarrhoea (due to the inflammation of the large intestine and rectal tissue), dehydration or reduced water consumption (as this will result in constipation and so increased straining when passing muck), or mycotoxin involvement from either feed or straw. Determining the cause is important if this is an increasing issue.

**Please do contact your vet with any concerns that you may have.**

## Feedback

Please let us know if there is anything that you would like including, or more information on, in a future newsletter.

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