

Pigs

April 2025

Edited by Ciarán Carroll



Welcome to the April edition of the Teagasc Pig Newsletter. Recent upward movements in pig prices are very welcome, it's great to see

the market remain strong. It give farmers some breathing space and the opportunity to reinvest in their farms.

April has been a very busy month for all in the Pig Development Department. It was great to see so many of you at the recent Irish Pig Health Society Symposium at the Curragh on April 8th. There was a great attendance, and the trade show, presentations and panel discussions generated a lot of interest, compliments to the organisers!

We have another full newsletter this month covering everything from health to nutrition.

Louise Clarke looks at the Care of Sick & Injured pigs highlighting how prompt decision making is

crucial to achieving best outcomes for the pig. She also covers the importance of maintain comfortable recovery pens on your farm.

Kieran Keane looks at the results of a trial in Moorepark feeding different Crude Protein (CP) levels to finisher pigs. The trial highlights the variability of CP levels in feed ingredients and the importance of formulating diets based on actual CP levels. It supports the importance of the work being done in the Moorepark Feed Nutrition Lab.

Neil Turchett gives an update on the activities in the Welfarmers project, including the recent consortium meeting in Lleida, Spain.

In this issue:

- Taking Care of the Sick & Injured Pig
- Crude Results from Protein Trial
- Welfarmers ProjectUpdate

Taking Care of Sick & Injured Pigs

Louise Clarke, Ballyhaise

Last month I attended a Pig Welfare Information evening in the Kilmore Hotel in Cavan organised by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine. This was a very well attended event and discussed issues around prompt decisions on sick pigs, hospital pen management, farm security and trespass prevention. This article will cover some of the topics that were discussed on the night.

Prompt Decision on Injured & Sick Animals

Early identification and appropriate treatment of sick or injured animals improves the chances of recovery and reduces the risk of suffering and suboptimal welfare for individual pigs. This will require appropriate and timely action on the movement/isolation, treatment, care and if necessary, prompt decisions on euthanasia. As such, a Health and Welfare Programme containing guidelines on the above should be developed in consultation with the unit vet and made available to all farm staff. This document should be reviewed and updated at least once a year. Some of the detail needed in the herd health and welfare programme are;

- Treatment of casualty pigs
- Vaccination policy, timing & dosage

- Control of parasites
- Specific disease control programmes e.g. Salmonella
- Quarantine of purchased stock
- Mixing & grouping of pigs
- Lameness monitoring & Footcare
- Prevention & control of vices
- Care of needles & syringes
- Bio-security: restrict access to unit

In order to make prompt decisions on the sick or injured animal we need to consider the condition of the animal;

- Is the animal fit for transport?
 - Can the pig walk on and off the lorry?
 - Is the carcass fit for human consumption?
- Treat
 - Is the pig likely to respond to treatment?
 - Can you monitor the condition of the animal?
 - Move to the hospital pen
- Euthanize humanely
 - Do not move to hospital pen

- Without delay ensure the animal is euthanized

Hospital Pen management

Specialised hospital accommodation should be designated for each section including sows, weaners and finishers. The purpose of hospital pens is to individually manage compromised pigs by providing these animals with improved housing conditions and a higher quality diet. Feed should be offered little and often to acutely sick pigs with a reduced appetite to avoid feed going stale. Pens should be designed to minimise the spread of infection and optimise recovery rates.

- Small group sizes and generous stocking rates are advised with ideally no more than five to six animals per pen from a maximum age range of three weeks.
- Housing Pens should be free from draughts, warm and well lit to allow for thorough inspection and have a comfortable lying area with bedding (shredded paper, straw or wood shavings) or a mat provided at all times. A solid lying area in hospital pens is recommended for injured sows.
- Feed and water should be readily accessible particularly for younger animals with supplementary trays or drinkers/bowls provided as required.
- Avoid a continuous flow in the hospital accommodation and ensure all pens are

thoroughly washed, disinfected and dried when emptied.

- Pens should be kept dry at all times and where bedding is used it should be replenished regularly.

Once a pig enters a hospital pen, it should be identified using a tag with the ID of the animal, date of entry to hospital accommodation and initial assessment recorded immediately. The cause of the illness or injury should be identified and if any doubt exists as to the cause of ill health or the most effective treatment, contact your vet. All treatments should be recorded and any prescribed medication must be recorded in the Veterinary Medicines Register. A thorough recording system must be in place to monitor the progress of animals and avoid the incidence of lingering pigs. Pigs that are not responding to treatment, animals with untreatable conditions that compromise welfare and pigs that cannot be transported humanely should be euthanized. Additionally animals showing no improvement or that have no prospect for improvement after two days of intensive care should be humanely euthanized without delay. There must be a suitable number of qualified staff to perform euthanasia. At least two staff members per unit should be competent in this at all times. [A decision tree tool for farmers and farm staff to](#)

Pigs

[aid on treatment and euthanasia decisions is available here](#). We suggest that you print off this poster and post it at various locations on your farm as a guide to staff so that they can make the right call on treatment and/or euthanasia of the casualty pig.

Farm security and trespass prevention

Review your operation's security procedures and ensure all appropriate measures have been taken. Establish check-in procedures for visitors at your farm and make sure all employees and family members know what to do if an unauthorized visitor or group arrives. All visitors should be asked to present identification and

verification of their purpose to come on-site. Visitors should be escorted at all times. If someone does not have the proper credentials and cannot establish that they are authorized to be on your property, they should be told to leave. Call the Gardai if they will not leave when asked to do so. Maintain basic security: lock all doors (barns, offices, cabinets), have proper lighting (consider motion sensor floodlights), install alarms and security cameras, and post signs for restricted areas and "no trespassing." If feasible, install fencing and gates around your property.

Crude Results from Protein Trial

Kieran Keane, Moorepark

We conducted a trial in the Moorepark Pig Research Facility last year to assess the animal performance and ammonia emission impacts of feeding different levels of crude protein (CP) in our finisher diets. There were 3 diets in the trial: 16%CP, 14%CP and 12%CP. Although the crude protein varied, we formulated the diets to keep SID lysine at a constant 1% and the amino acid

ratios the same. We also kept Net Energy at 10MJ/kg for all diets. These diets were fed over a 68-day period to finishers starting at approx. 42-44kgs. See the table below for Average Daily Feed Intakes (ADFI), Average Daily Gain (ADG), final average weight and Feed Conversion Ratio (FCR).

Table 1. Intake, Growth and Performance

Diet	ADFI (kg/day)	ADG (kg/day)	Final Average Weight (kg)	FCR
A - 16%CP	2.93	1.25	129kg	2.33
B - 14%CP	2.86	1.13	121kg	2.53
C - 12%CP	2.45	0.93	106kg	2.63

Daily intakes were similar on the 16CP and 14CP diets but lower on the 12CP diet. This was obvious to us from an early stage and was even apparent from the feed silo contents. The energy in all diets were the same but the 12CP diet had a 65% barley inclusion which would have meant that it contained more fibre than the other 2 diets (NDF 12.1% vs 9.3%).

The average growth rate of the pigs on the 16CP diet was 120g per day ahead of the 14CP fed pigs and 320g per day ahead of the 12CP fed pigs. The feed conversion rate ranged from 2.33 to 2.63

across the treatments. This FCR difference would translate to a €0.5m differential in the annual profitability of a 700-sow unit when all input costs are considered. This is possibly the reason that there are not too many finisher diets formulated at 12%CP!

However, this doesn't tell the full story. The table below shows what was actually fed to the pigs. The diets were formulated using our feed formulation software package with standard crude protein matrix values for each ingredient. The crude protein content of the main bulk

Pigs

ingredients (barley, wheat, maize and soya) and the resultant diets were analysed using wet chemistry in the Moorepark Feed Nutrition lab. The feed for the 10-week trial was made in 2 separate batches 5 weeks apart. The recipe stayed the same, but the raw ingredients were from different loads for the 2 batches. This

resulted in large changes to the dietary crude protein. The table below shows the intended crude protein content in formulation and the actual resultant dietary crude protein of each batch of feed. It also shows the crude protein of the ingredients as per formulation and in reality.

Table 2. Formulated CP and actual CP of diets and ingredients

	Formulated CP	Batch 1 CP	Batch 2 CP
Diet			
A - 16%CP	16.0%	15.4%	14.6%
B - 14%CP	14.0%	13.6%	12.6%
C - 12%CP	12.0%	11.9%	10.8%
Raw Mat.			
Barley	10.0%	10.5%	8.8%
Wheat	10.5%	9.6%	9.6%
Maize	8.1%	7.6%	7.0%
Soya	47.2%	47.0%	47.0%

Although the diets were formulated at 16%,14% and 12%CP, due to ingredient variability the first batch of each feed had a slight decrease in crude protein and the second batches of each had a further about 1% decrease in crude protein. So, when comparing growth and performance on the first table we are in fact comparing 14.6, 12.6 and 10.8% CP for the last 5 weeks of the trial. The difference in growth rate towards the end of the trial was almost 400g per day between the highest and lowest crude protein diets. In addition, as crude protein is reduced per

ingredient, so are lysine and other amino acids whilst the proportions of starch, fat and/or NDF will rise in its place. This may further explain the difference in intakes across the 3 diets.

However, if we go back to the Table 2 above and we had been pre-armed with the ingredient analysis we would have formulated differently. Table 3 below shows the impacts of reformulating the diets back to the intended crude protein levels. In this case, I only changed the bulk ingredients listed on the first table thus keeping the premix the same for each diet. This

Pigs

was done to both batches of each diet and the composite price increases shown below. The first column below shows the extra cost per tonne of feed produced based on ingredient costs. The second column shows the improvement in FCR I have allowed in the model as a result of

reformulating. This is a very moderate improvement, particularly to the 14% diet which could improve by 0.15 FCR points. The third column shows the annual financial benefit to a 700-sow farm if we were to reformulate allowing for the extra feed cost.

Table 3. Formulated CP and actual CP of diets and ingredients

Diet	Extra Cost per Tonne to reformulate to intended CP	FCR change	Modelling cost per annum unit saving if reformulated
A - 16%CP	€3.92	-0.025	€25,740.00
B - 14%CP	€4.84	-0.05	€ 51,505.00
C - 12%CP	€6.01	-0.05	€39,985.00

Alas, hindsight is great. In an ideal world, ingredients would remain the same and we wouldn't need to try to predict these occurrences. However, if we knew what our ingredient proximate analysis was before using them, we could reformulate diets more frequently and without some of the safety

margins we allow for today thus saving money on feed in that way. That is what we are trying to achieve in our Feed Nutrition Lab in Moorepark and why lab analysis is important and will save pig producers money. More to follow!

WELFARMERS: Collecting Good Practices to Improve Pig Welfare

Neil Turchett, Moorepark



- Optimising space allowance and flooring for fattening pigs

A Collaborative European Effort

Over the past few months, project partners from eight European countries — including Ireland — have been actively collecting good practices from pig farms. At Teagasc, efforts have been focused on contacting farmers and gathering information to contribute to the database of practices.

The WelFarmers project is now in its second year. Its main goal is to collect and share good practices from pig farms across the EU that can improve pig welfare. The first round of results will be shared later this year with farmers, technical services, and policymakers.

The project focuses on four key themes:

- Loose housing facilities for lactating sows
- Methods to reduce pain during castration
- Strategies for raising undocked pigs

From May onwards, experts from various backgrounds — including farmers, veterinarians, advisors, researchers, and representatives from the food industry — will begin analysing and scoring the submitted practices for each theme.

Lleida Meeting: Sharing Progress and Good Practices

On 3rd–4th April 2025, the second in-person consortium meeting took place in **Lleida, Spain**. This was an opportunity for project members to collaborate, share progress, and discuss any ongoing challenges. From Ireland, Teagasc colleagues Edgar Garcia Manzanilla, Ciaran Carroll, Laura Boyle, and Neil Joseph Turchett attended, along with a delegation from the Irish



Pigs

Farmers' Association (IFA). More than 40 participants took part in discussions on project deliverables, the sharing of collected good practices, and the communication and analysis strategy for the year ahead.

The meeting concluded with a visit to the **Grupo Vall Companys 5.0 pig farm**, where a presentation was delivered on the production methods, performance, and the integration of advanced technologies on the farm.

Connecting with Irish Farmers

Teagasc was also present at the **Irish Pig Health Society Symposium**, held on 8th April at the Curragh Racecourse, Co. Kildare. This event served as a great opportunity to promote the WelFarmers project and connect with stakeholders in the Irish pig sector.



International Visitors



On 15th April, a delegation from Malta's swine sector — including farmers from the Maltese pig cooperative (K.I.M.) and government officials — visited Teagasc offices in Ashtown, Dublin. During their visit, Teagasc advisors gave presentations on the current state of Irish pig production, key welfare considerations, and the work being carried out under the WelFarmers project.

Get Involved and Stay Informed

The WelFarmers project is driven by collaboration, innovation, and a shared vision for higher animal welfare standards in pig farming. As we move into the next phase, we look forward to continued engagement with farmers, advisors, and all stakeholders.

To stay updated on our progress, insights, and shared practices, follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and the [333 website](#).

If you're a pig farmer and would like to be considered for next year's Good Practice submission, feel free to get in touch with us — we'd be happy to hear from you!

Irish Pig Health Symposium 2025

The Irish Pig Health Symposium 2025 event took place once again at the Curragh Racecourse on April 8th. This year's symposium, themed "Pigs, People and Pathogens: Mastering Farrowing, Animal Health, and Workforce Management," featured a great programme focused on key industry challenges and best practices. It was great to see so many of you at our stand, thanks for calling by!



European Pig Producers Congress

This year's European Pig Producers Congress will be in the Danish city of Kolding from May 14th to 16th and the theme chosen by Danske Svineproducenter, the Danish Pig Farmers Association, is 'Future of Pig Farming'. Wednesday afternoon starts with technical talks from the Danish Agriculture & Food Council and event sponsors DanBred, Ceva and Hendrix Genetics. Thursday's visits include a 1,200 sow farm and the Danish Pig Academy followed by an evening at Koldinghus Castle while Friday includes visits to the German border to view the infamous wild boar fence and the Danish Safety Wash for livestock transporters before the gala dinner at the hotel on Friday night. The Congress fee for members is €420 and accommodation is €150 per night. Explore smart farming, innovate for tomorrow and network globally, Danish delights await you!! For more information please contact EPP Ireland secretary Shane McAuliffe.