

JULY 2021



PIGS

TECHNICAL BRIEFING
FROM YOUR RED TRACTOR ASSURANCE TEAM



CHAIR'S VIEW: STEWART HOUSTON | PIG BOARD



Red Tractor's standards underpin our industry's credibility and strength, ensuring that we remain world leaders in animal health, welfare and responsible medicine use.

Earlier this year we held the biggest consultation in Red Tractor's history to ensure the next evolution of the standards – which will be brought in from 1 November 2021 – help safeguard the future of our members' farms.

Red Tractor's Technical Advisory Committee and Sector Board, which are made up of a broad cross section of the supply chain – from farmers to retailers – have reviewed the feedback and reached a consensus.

Please read this technical briefing to learn more about the changes we are introducing or revising. This is

especially important because some proposals which were put out for review in January have been re-shaped or removed completely.

We were pleased to reach a consensus about several important areas, including taking action on tail biting, refining the use of antibiotics, humane euthanasia, biosecurity and disease control and quality staff training.

“THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR UK PIG FARMERS TO DEMONSTRATE HOW COMMITTED THEY ARE TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVING STANDARDS ON FARM, NOT ONLY BUILDING ON OUR HIGH WELFARE STANDARDS BUT INCREASING CONFIDENCE IN OUR SUPPLY CHAIN AND RETAINING CUSTOMER SUPPORT FOR UK PORK.”

**ZOE DAVIES, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
NATIONAL PIG ASSOCIATION**

With ever-increasing interest and scrutiny of how food is produced, compliance with these standards not only serves to protect the reputation of your own farm, but the entire sector in which you play a vital part.

GETTING READY FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2021

Red Tractor's chief executive Jim Moseley said: “Our standards need to achieve two key objectives – first to meet the needs of consumers who expect high standards but shop keenly on price, and second to provide farmers and the supply chain with manageable standards. Getting that balance right then also satisfies the needs of food businesses and government.

“We'll be sharing the manuals and creating helpful guides. Please keep an eye on your post, emails and our website for updates.”

www.redtractorassurance.org.uk

IN BRIEF: WHAT'S CHANGED AND WHY?

The new Red Tractor pig standards will be audited on farm from 1 November 2021. In the next few weeks, we will send every member a manual detailing the new standards in full and we are producing helpful guides on what has changed and why.

Below, we have detailed the key changes which have been agreed following the consultation process. This is not an exhaustive list and you should refer to the standards manuals and guides for all detailed changes.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Husbandry procedures involving interference with sensitive tissues or bone are generally prohibited by the Animal Welfare Act. Some are allowed but only when performed by a person permitted to undertake them.

We are providing extra clarity to ensure that where they are carried out, they are done so appropriately and that only those procedures listed in the veterinary health plan are undertaken.

All units must now put measures in place to minimise the risk of tail biting and avoid the need for tail docking. This includes an annual risk assessment on all units and an action plan on farms rearing docked pigs. Anyone carrying out docking needs to have evidence to support the continued need, including a detailed quarterly veterinary review.

Nose ringing (a single septum ring only) can now only be carried out by someone the vet has signed off as being competent.

Red Tractor's position on the use of immunocastration products has been incorporated into the standards. It is permitted with written permission



from your processor customer. Surgical castration remains prohibited.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

You will already be keeping health and performance records; incidents of tail biting must now be recorded, as well as overall mortality figures.

We have added a new appendix which explicitly sets out Red Tractor's expectations as to what is and is not acceptable when it comes to pig handling. Ensuring pigs are handled in a way which avoids injury and stress is a priority for the sector. Also, we are now clear with our requirements regarding the use of passageways as isolation facilities for sick or injured pigs.

All pigs must always have access to sufficient enrichment, including sows in farrowing crates. Enrichment satisfies a pig's desire to root, manipulate and explore its surroundings. We have strengthened our enrichment standard, in line with Defra's Code of Practice, to require specific combinations of enrichment materials and objects, to ensure this important behavioural need of pigs is met.

EUTHANASIA

Red Tractor's standards focus on ensuring that pigs do not suffer unnecessarily and that euthanasia, where required, is done promptly and humanely.

Ensuring stock people are robustly trained and keeping a close eye on their competency is essential. Initial euthanasia training must now be carried out by a vet or via a Humane Slaughter Association course.

Reassessment of competency must be undertaken every two years by a vet. And the farm's euthanasia policy must now include contingency procedures and be signed by your vet, to verify that the content is appropriate.

Where a mechanical device is used for piglet euthanasia, we have aligned our requirements with the Humane Slaughter Association's guidance on the minimum energy requirement and appropriate restraint of the piglet to ensure it is effective and humane.

Steps must be taken to carry out euthanasia away from potential onlookers (where it does not introduce a delay or unnecessary suffering). You must check that your actions have been effective so that you can repeat swiftly if necessary, thereby minimising distress to the animal.



**LOOK OUT FOR
OUR MANUALS
AND HELPFUL
GUIDES ON
OUR WEBSITE.**

**HOUSING, SHELTER AND
HANDLING FACILITIES**

We are seeing more extreme and unpredictable weather events due to climate change, and it is important that you take steps during such events to protect pig welfare. Red Tractor members will now need to have a documented extreme weather contingency plan which outlines the measures to be taken in unusually hot/cold weather, snow, severe wet weather and ventilation failure.

Pigs will sometimes lie in their dunging area, for example if there has been hot weather. However, ongoing behaviour of this kind suggests that the pigs' environmental needs are not being met. Pigs must have access to a dry lying area and steps must be taken to ensure pigs do not persistently lie dirty.

Lighting must be adequate to allow pigs to express their normal behaviours, to rest and to interact with other pigs. A minimum of eight hours of continuous light and six hours of continuous dark is now required, and pigs must be able to access an area lit to at least 40 lux.

Five weeks is now the maximum time a sow can remain in a crate after farrowing. If the sow is suckling additional piglets as a nurse sow this may be extended to eight weeks, but only if the sow is in good condition. Pressure to move away from traditional farrowing crates means temporary crating has become an attractive option as it allows for the confinement

of sows during the risky period – the first few days after farrowing. We now have a *recommendation* that where a temporary crating system is used it is opened as soon as possible after farrowing to allow the sow to turn around freely.

Nest-building material, such as natural rope, hessian, or straw, must now be provided to all sows in at least the 24-hour period prior to farrowing regardless of flooring type. This will facilitate natural nest-building behaviour and optimise farrowing and lactation.

Indoor loose farrowing pens must have sufficient space for a sow to turn around and lie down. In addition, they must have rails or other means to protect piglets from crushing.

Other existing legal requirements, including the need for pigs to always have sight of other pigs and space provision where self-locking individual feeding stalls are used, have also been incorporated as new standards.

FEED AND WATER

Drinking water can be a source of bacteria. If the annual testing of private water supplies show bacterial contamination is above the specified threshold, then you must now investigate and act.

Contamination of feed by birds, rodents and other wildlife is also a risk factor for spreading disease. You are

now required to take steps to minimise the contamination of feed stored in hoppers.

**BIOSECURITY AND
DISEASE CONTROL**

You will already have clearly defined biosecure areas to manage the flow of people and vehicles. We now require visible markers at vehicle entry points into biosecure areas.

Fallen stock vehicles travel from farm to farm and risk transmitting disease. A new standard requires that vehicles collecting fallen stock must not enter the farm's biosecure area.

When there is an outbreak of disease, it can be useful if nearby farms are made aware so they can tighten their biosecurity. To facilitate this, members must now sign up to the Significant Diseases Charter and report disease outbreaks.

OUTDOOR PIGS

Wild animals can spread disease such as TB to pigs. You must now document and implement a wild animal control plan of measures to minimise wild animal access to pigs.

Where outdoor pigs are held in a collection area prior to transport they must have access to water, and it must be operated on a batch basis with cleaning between batches to minimise the transmission of pathogens.



IN BRIEF: WHAT'S CHANGED AND WHY? (CONT.)

FALLEN STOCK

Containers must be used for storing fallen stock (except where it is not possible for adult breeding stock) and must be locked unless empty. We are also recommending that fallen stock are marked with indelible dye when placed into storage, because there have been incidents where activists have removed them and positioned them in passageways or pens for photographs.

MEDICINES

Your vet is already reviewing the antibiotic use on your unit each year. We are now requesting that vets make recommendations for alternative disease control measures where possible, to minimise any prophylactic use of antibiotics.

Where a farm is identified as persistently using high amounts of antibiotics, they must now develop and implement an action plan with their vet to reduce antibiotic use. At least one person on every farm must undertake training in the responsible use of medicines.



Medicines must now be stored in a fridge separate from food and drink items. The temperature of the fridge must also be recorded every week. A broken needle policy must be in place setting out how staff should deal with broken needles being left in animals.

TRACEABILITY AND ASSURANCE STATUS

Members wishing to import non-assured stock/semen must now seek permission from Red Tractor directly, in advance of all consignments of non-assured breeding stock or semen.

Semen and breeding stock suppliers must be proactive in informing their customers if they lose their Red Tractor certificate, to ensure assured pig units are aware and can make alternative arrangements.

Farms can have their Red Tractor certificate suspended or withdrawn at any time, so our *recommendation* is that you check the assurance status of source farms in advance using Red Tractor's checker. This will ensure you do not inadvertently bring non-assured pigs onto your unit thereby risking your own assurance.

THE ENVIRONMENT

You are already storing agrochemicals in a manner that minimises the risk of contamination and pollution to crops, feedstuffs, animals, soils, groundwater and watercourses. A revision of our standard requires that liquid feed spillages can be contained appropriately. Requirements for organic manure now cover temporary field heaps, effluent from manure heaps and

capacity of slurry storage. Red Tractor farmers will also be required to have an up-to-date calculation of their slurry storage requirements.

STAFF TRAINING

Anyone involved with the care of pigs must now complete online pig welfare training. This will set out best practice, with an initial focus on pig handling, as practices evolve to keep pace with consumer expectations. Ensuring pigs are always treated compassionately is vital for pig welfare and upholding the industry's reputation.

All farms with workers must also have a written Health and Safety policy – this is a slight advance on the legal baseline which only applies to businesses with more than five employees.

COMING SOON... 

Don't forget!

THE NEW RED TRACTOR PIG STANDARDS WILL BE AUDITED ON FARM FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2021.