

# **How Management Promotes Disease Prevention/Control and Staff Success**

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The goal of swine production companies is to achieve production targets by devising a system of raising pigs to give unit staff members the best opportunity to be successful. The team members have various levels of husbandry skills, which test our ability to achieve targets. The challenge is to devise a production system to give an employee with average husbandry skills the opportunity to achieve above-average results.

## **Upper Management**

Upper management can make many decisions that will promote unit success in achieving health goals. The main routes disease organisms enter a unit are from transport of infected pigs into the system, movement of animals within the system in contaminated vehicles, and from other swine units in the neighborhood. Herd health can be protected by placing units in isolated locations, minimizing the number of herd additions and sources, and proper cleaning, disinfection and drying of intersanctum and market vehicles. Upper management can insist herd additions are "free" of many diseases, including atrophic rhinitis, mange/lice, whipworms, dysentery, pleuropneumonia, pseudorabies (Aujeszky's disease), mycoplasma pneumonia and PRRS. Long term, the focus must be to isolate and test new breeding stock to keep these diseases out. Thus, the staff does not have to deal with these diseases.

## **Health Management**

There are very effective vaccines against certain diseases/organisms. These include erysipelas, leptospirosis, parvovirus, E. coli, Clostridium perfringens type C (necrotic enteritis), salmonella and ileitis. For the most part, the vaccines are so effective that these diseases do not create many problems that requires staff attention.

The list of diseases that unit personnel are required to manage or treat is short. These include bacterial pneumonia, rotavirus, roundworms, Strep. Suis (meningitis), Haemophilus parasuis (Glasser's disease), Actinobacillus suis (septicemia), influenza and coccidiosis. Treatment protocols can be developed for these agents, giving the staff the greatest likelihood of success. The only disease without a good management option is hemorrhagic bowel syndrome. In a large system, the ability to react to disease with medications is limited. The option to use feed grade antibiotics is a logistical issue. It seems the feed bins are always full when a switch is needed. Milling, trucking, withdrawal times and residues also are issues that must be considered. The need for fast action requires the use of water medication and individual injections. Limiting antibiotic choices with attention to resistances and withdrawal times will aid unit personnel to make appropriate therapy decisions.

## **Environmental Management**

Barns and rooms need to be cleaned, disinfected and dried between pig groups. This is a greater challenge during the winter. Lowered bacterial and viral loads reduce the disease exposure for new pigs.

Within a system, similar building style including fan and heater controls is critical. Automated environmental control allows temperature curves and air inlets to be preset. If any adjustment (i.e. air inlet) is required, some type of meter (i.e. manometer) is needed to give the manager a guide as adjustments are made. The staff should use door charts to make daily notations as the building environment is monitored which allows rapid review if problems arise.

## **Production Management**

Within a system, standardized procedures and protocols (SOP's) are essential. Constant teaching, discussion and review of SOP's are required. It is much easier for production supervisors to review and check on compliance rather than try to determine what is going on in the barns after problems arise.

Standardization allows seamless employee movement between units. The most common cause for not achieving production targets is inconsistent number of weekly matings. Increasing the likelihood of unit personnel with average husbandry skills successfully recognizing early signs of estrus in the breeding females is paramount. Gilts will show stronger signs of estrus when properly developed to thirty-two weeks of age and 16 mm of backfat before breeding. By maximizing lactation feed intake with an average weaning age of 19 days or more, gilts and sows will show stronger estrus characteristics with subsequent increased farrowing rates and born alive. Finding females demonstrating strong signs of estrus gives the breeding staff the best opportunity of successfully meeting pregnancy targets.

## Team Building

The production management team is critical. These individuals oversee all aspects of production and set the production tone of the system. Four core competences are essential if these people are going to maintain focus and direction of each unit. These competences are:

- Vision of realistic production objectives
- Ability to teach the science of pig production and motivate unit members
- Know-how to apply the science in a practical manner
- Willingness and ability to make the tough decisions about people

To be successful, the production management team must reduce reaction time when addressing problems. This requires creation of an environment of cooperation between management and unit personnel. People must communicate and trust each other!

## Conclusion

In a coordinated system, the success of the unit staff is essential. This is my list of six things that management can do to promote disease prevention and employee success, giving the individuals at each unit the feeling that they are really part of the team:

- **Do not purchase health problems.** Disease creates enough problems. Purchased breeding stock can be "free" of certain diseases, thus eliminating the need to deal with them.
- **Proper gilt development.** Gilts that show strong signs of estrus are more easily detected in heat and increase the likelihood of acceptable farrowing rates and born alive averages being achieved.
- **Weaning age.** As weaning age increases, the rebreeding performance (subsequent farrowing rate and born alive) of sows improves. The post weaning pig performance also improves.
- **Remove bottlenecks in all processes.** There is always a more efficient way to perform all tasks. Be open to change, do not get stuck in a "rut." Listen to the people actually performing the tasks. There may be a better way.
- **Reduce reaction time.** When problems arise, management must address them now, before they get out of control. This demonstrates that management does care. When problems are not addressed quickly, unit personnel many times feel an "us against them" situation exists. This is never productive.
- **Create an environment of cooperation.** People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Remember, we are on the same team. Success of the system depends on the success of the people. Remember, it is always the people- working together!

*Editor's Note: This presentation was first made at the 2005 Banff Pork Seminar. It is reprinted here with the Banff coordinator's permission.*