

To try and improve the competitiveness of the English pig industry, BPEX and the NPA recognised that the industry needed to focus on improving reproductive performance and spread the costs of production over more pigs. So after 12 months of development the BPEX AI Quality Standard was launched in September 2006. It is based on an evaluation of each step of the production processes for the collection and preparation of semen and agreement on the 'best practice' standards.

Development

The five main British pig breeding companies (ACMC, Hermitage Seaborough, JSR Genetics, PIC, Rattlerow) engaged in a unique collaboration to develop the Standard and all participate in the assurance programme. Technical input was provided by AI consultant, Dr Hanneke Feitsma, of The Institute for Pig genetics in The Netherlands.

The Quality Standard programme includes

- Promoting best practice on-farm to improve performance
- Recording and setting new targets for breeding herd performance
- Using an Ultimate CASA system for independent semen quality analysis at the Nationwide Laboratory in Leeds, who operate as the BPEX AI Reference Laboratory
- Complying with the BPEX Standard for Porcine Semen Quality in pig AI Centres
- Each AI centre completing an annual independent audit by SAI Global.

Time invested

The Standard was the culmination of 12 months of development through consultation, and was launched in September 2006.

Since the Standard was launched three workshops have been held for the laboratory and boar house personnel, covering Bacteriology, Laboratory Hygiene and Sperm Quality Assessment. A fourth planned workshop will cover Temperature Control throughout the process.

Why you should purchase from a certified AI centre

The introduction of the Standard further extends the chain of assurance to include AI, to provide producers with an unprecedented assurance that the semen delivered to their farms can be used with confidence, as it will have been produced to an AI Standard that is comparable to those in operation in the EU. Using assured AI is also an important part of achieving the BPEX 2TS target.

Key points from the Standard

The AI Quality Standard is divided into 10 major areas, shown below, each containing a set of standards.

All participating AI centres must show compliance with these standards during their annual independent audit.

- Legal requirements
- Semen collection
- Semen transport and processing laboratory
- Semen quality assessment
- Extender preparation and controls
- Semen dilution
- Production data recording
- Semen storage/despatch
- Reference laboratory
- Independent audit by a recognised body and a veterinary visit.

Further information

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