

# Health is King



Richard Bows

Significant benefits to lower the cost of production (CoP) for a pig business were identified during a study tour to Scotland. The visit, involving producers from across the

country, was organised by Richard Bows, AHDB Pork KE Manager.

A well-known pig producer and a respected vet, delivered presentations on how to manage a partial de-stock.

The producer, Dennis Bridgeford, has 545 sows on a single farrow-to-finish site and 125 acres of arable land in north east Scotland. He described how his unit had been suffering from disease and poor health, including enzootic pneumonia, APP, PCV2, pleurisy and pig flu.

The poor health and resultant high food conversion ratio had affected the profitability of the business, with his CoP

at the time being around 140p/kg deadweight. Overall production was suppressed and he was having to use more antibiotics than he would have liked; this was not only a material cost, but also very demotivating for himself and his staff.

After careful consideration and conversations with his bank manager, Dennis decided to carry out a partial de-stock in 2015. Some grow-outs were rented to take weaners off site to finish, while the stock at the home unit were medicated to eliminate the disease challenge. In addition, Dennis took the opportunity to re-vamp some of his buildings and improve the pig flow around the unit.

Currently, no medication is being used and Dennis estimates his CoP to be 120p/kg deadweight (versus the 140p/kg prior to the de-stock) and morale is at an all-time high. He believes the success of such an undertaking relies on all of the staff buying-in to the idea and adhering to the biosecurity protocols set out by the vet. >

## Production figures before and after the de-stock

	Before	After
Born alive	11.61	12.42
Pre-weaning mortality	13.29%	9.63%
Pigs weaned	9.85	11.17 (12.26 more recently)
Post weaning mortality	7-8%	4%
Average DLWG	646g/d	776g/d
Days to bacon	147+	125
Carcase weight	78kg	81kg



## Reasons that de-stocks fail

- Inaccurate dosing with medication
- Failure to notice sows not eating
- Inadequate washing of areas/equipment
- Failure to stabilise/homogenise
- Poor weather
- Insufficient communication with contract rearer
- Issues on neighbouring farms

See the photo story from this study tour online: [pork.ahdb.org.uk/news/photo-stories/](http://pork.ahdb.org.uk/news/photo-stories/)

# The AI Pod

Feedback from the industry has suggested there is a need for a well-designed AI area to improve reproductive performance and working environment for really large units in the outdoor setting. With this in mind, AHDB Pork commissioned some work to design a new AI area to provide the optimum environment for sows during heat detection and insemination, as well as a high degree of labour efficiency.

The AI Pod, as the new design has been named, allows for a much more efficient operation when processing large numbers of sows. Production on the trial site initially took a slight dip, as sows were being served a little too quickly, but once staff were familiar with the new system, and used it as intended, figures



improved. The design gives stockpeople more control while serving (in a more comfortable working environment) and then provides sows with an ideal resting area post service, which in turn improves production figures.

John Theobald, Rattlerow Farms Ltd, said: "I've found the AI Pod has made processing large numbers of sows (1000+) far more efficient than in conventional systems and productivity has been excellent once stockpeople are familiar with the new setup." >

## Cost:

AI pod: **£9,000 – £11,000**, dependent on specification  
Additional tent to use as 'holding area' post-mating: **£2,500**

View the full report and video at: [pork.ahdb.org.uk/research-innovation/innovative-ideas/outdoor/](http://pork.ahdb.org.uk/research-innovation/innovative-ideas/outdoor/)



## RAFT on water

Adequate supply of good quality drinking water is a precious resource and essential for meeting welfare legislation and achieving optimum performance. A new AHDB-funded project is under way in conjunction with Raft Solutions Ltd. collating information on how best to test, maintain and clean waterlines, as well as highlighting considerations when using water as a delivery vehicle for medication. >

Find out more: [pork.ahdb.org.uk/environment-buildings/water-soil-and-air](http://pork.ahdb.org.uk/environment-buildings/water-soil-and-air)