



BREEDING

Focus on breeding

It is important there are always enough gilts available to serve, in the correct condition and at the required time. Producers should aim to maintain a replacement gilt pool of at least 12% of the target herd numbers.

This enables the planned culling of old or less productive sows. But it is difficult to control everything all the time so producers need to be aware of and manage any holes coming up in the system, such as low service weeks when there has been a rise in cull rates or late returns among sows.

To make sure gilts are ready for service, the aim is for them to be 135-170kg liveweight, 220-270 days old with a body condition score of 3-3.5.

Good gilt management is the starting point of a productive breeding herd and will help improve the number of pigs weaned per sow per year, the aim of BPEX's Breed+3 initiative this year.

Gilts: be aware of 'holes' in the system



To download the 2TS Gilt Management pack, to go: www.bpex.org.uk/2TS/breeding/GiltManagement.aspx



More labour, more piglets

Greater labour use is linked to improved sow productivity, a project has found. Where staff spent approximately 35 minutes per litter on sow breeding and fertility tasks, the herds achieved around 23 piglets weaned per sow per year, whereas spending around 50 minutes per litter resulted in an average 27.5 piglets weaned.

Details of labour use were recorded on 22 indoor breeding units of varying size. Delta-innovation Ltd and BPEX ran the project, using a grant from the BPEX Innovation Fund.

MANAGEMENT TIPS

Chance to chat

The chance to talk to people from other pig units is one of the benefits most often mentioned when people talk about their training.

As well as learning about practical pig management from industry experts, they often pick up new ideas from the rest of the group by discussing different ways of doing things on different farms. Going to training events boosts pig husbandry and management skills which, in turn, helps improve pig performance.

For information about training and development activities, along with possible funding, please contact Samantha Bowsher at BPEX: 07976 980753.

For more, go to: www.bpex.org.uk/2ts/innovationfund/completedprojects.aspx