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Many pig producers and stockpeople work on farms that are also their family homes, making security concerns particularly personal.

Farm gate breach more than biosecurity risk

■ Human cost of animal welfare activism

AUSTRALIAN pig producers understand better than most that public confidence depends on maintaining high standards of animal welfare.

The industry is subject to stringent animal welfare legislation, quality assurance programs, veterinary oversight and increasing consumer expectations.

Producers recognise that genuine welfare concerns should be investigated through appropriate regulatory channels.

However, a distinction exists between lawful reporting of suspected welfare

breaches and illegal trespass onto commercial farms.

Over the past decade, organised animal rights activism has increasingly involved unauthorised entry onto pig farms and livestock enterprises across Australia.

These incidents have created consequences extending far beyond property damage or legal disputes.

They have affected the psychological wellbeing of farming families, disrupted animal management, increased biosecurity risks and contributed to growing stress within regional communities.

Farming families the hidden victims

Public discussion about activist incursions often centres on footage released online or debates over farming practices.

Less visible are the experiences of producers and farm employees.

For many producers, a pig farm is not simply a workplace – it is also their home.

Many farms employ family members across generations and staff often develop long-term relationships with the animals under their care.

When unknown individuals enter sheds

continued P2

Looking ahead to APL's next chapter

AS my final article for the Australian Pork Newspaper after seven years leading APL, I am delighted to announce the appointment of our new chief executive officer Dr Darryl D'Souza, following a comprehensive recruitment process.

This appointment marks the beginning of Australian Pork Limited's next chapter, with Darryl bringing extensive leadership experience and a strong commitment to supporting Australian pork producers, advancing industry growth and delivering value for levy payers.

Darryl brings an exceptional combination of industry knowledge, scientific expertise and commercial leadership.

He is widely respected across the Australian pork sector for his contributions to the industry's productivity and research over more than two decades.

Importantly, he also already possesses a deep understanding of APL, having previously served as general manager research and innovation.

Darryl's focus will remain firmly on ensuring APL continues to deliver tangible value for levy payers, drives con-



sumer preference for pork, leads innovation and adoption, supports industry sustainability and strengthens the industry's ability to respond to future opportunities and challenges.

He will commence as CEO on October 6, 2026.

As chief executive officer of Australian Pork Limited, Darryl will lead the team in delivering the six key priorities of APL's 2026-27 Annual Operating Plan:

- Increasing share of fresh meat
- Increasing pork on menu (foodservice)
- Increasing export market value
- Driving meaningful research, innovation and extension
- Animal health and welfare first
- Deepening member and industry engagement.

Some of these priorities build on the work already commenced during the previous financial year, while others will see APL deliver new projects aimed at enabling a thriving

pork industry even during uncertain times.

The projects delivered by the APL team under these priority areas will further the industry's five-year goal of becoming Australia's most versatile protein from farm to fork, sustainably adding \$1 billion to farm-gate value by 2030.

As I prepare to hand over the reins, I do so with confidence in the strength of APL's strategy, the capability of our people and the shared commitment across industry to deliver on these ambitions.

I have every confidence that Darryl and the APL team will continue to build momentum for producers, members and the broader pork sector.

It has been an extraordinary privilege to lead Australian Pork Limited during a period of significant change, growth and opportunity for our industry.

I am incredibly proud of what has been achieved along-

side our producers, delegates, directors, staff, researchers, government partners and stakeholders and wish APL and the entire industry all the very best for the future.

Over the past six months, I have had the opportunity to say my goodbyes to many of you, and it has reminded me that this role has been far more than just a job.

It has been a privilege to get to know, support and advocate for people across the pork industry and to work alongside those who are so committed to its future.

Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me onto your farms, shared your time and insights and worked with me to help strengthen the industry.

I am especially grateful to our delegates, the APL Board, the APL team, supply chain partners and the many people across industry who have contributed so much over the past seven years.

To the APL team, thank you for your dedication and commitment.

It has been an amazing seven years leading the organisation and I leave with a simple reflection – celebrate the wins, stay united as an industry and remember that we are always stronger together. 🐷



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Pork Industry Calendar of Events

2026

AUG 12 – 2026 National Renewables in Ag Conference – Orange, NSW. <https://renewablesinagconference.com.au>

AUG 19-21 – VIV Select China 2026 – Shanghai, China. <https://china.viv.net>

AUG 25 & 26 – Minitube Porcine TechDays, Golden Point, Victoria. <https://form.jotform.com/260257675984068>

AUG 26-28 – ILDEX Philippines 2026 – Manila, Philippines. <https://ildex-philippines.com>

SEP 14-17 – ECPLF 2026 – Valencia, Spain. <https://www.ecplf2026.com>

SEP 19-22 – Allen D. Leman Swine Conference 2026 – St Paul Minnesota, USA. <https://lemanconference.umn.edu>

SEP 22-24 – Expomeat 2026 – Sao Paulo, Brazil. <https://www.expomeat.com.br/>

OCT 6-8 – International PRRS Symposium 2026 – Barcelona, Spain. <https://iprrs2026.org>

OCT 14-15 – Dutch Pork & Poultry Expo 2026 – Hardenberg, Netherlands. <https://www.porkpoultryexpo.nl>

OCT 21-23 – Pork Expo Mexico – Aguascalientes, Mexico. <http://pork-expo.org/>

OCT 26-29 – 2026 Inaugural APHVA Conference – Hobart, Tasmania. aphvapresident@gmail.com

How to supply event details:
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Commercial pig farms operate under strict biosecurity protocols designed to minimise the risk of disease entering livestock facilities.



Australian pig producers operate under evolving community expectations while balancing animal welfare, biosecurity, employee safety and business sustainability.

Farm gate breach more than biosecurity risk

from P1
during the night, often wearing dark clothing and carrying cameras or drones, farmers frequently describe feelings similar to those experienced after burglary or home invasion. Questions arise immediately:

- Are the intruders still on the property?
- What biosecurity risks have they introduced?
- Have gates or equipment been tampered with?

- Will footage appear online without context?
- Will the family become the target of harassment?

These concerns often continue long after the trespass has ended.

Psychological impacts
Agriculture already experiences elevated rates of psychological distress compared with many other industries.

Financial uncertainty, disease risk, weather variability and regulatory pressure contribute significantly to producer stress.

Illegal activist incursions add another layer. Producers have described:

- Anxiety about returning home after dark
- Difficulty sleeping following overnight trespass
- Hypervigilance around security cameras and vehicle movements

- Fear for the safety of children living on farm
- Stress associated with online abuse following publication of activist footage
- Feelings of being personally vilified despite caring deeply for their livestock.

Unlike many workplaces, farms cannot simply 'close the gates' after hours.

Families continue living where the incident occurred.

Biosecurity – an invisible threat

For pig producers, biosecurity is fundamental.

Australia remains free from several devastating pig diseases, including African swine fever, making strict on-farm biosecurity essential.

Unauthorised visitors bypass carefully designed procedures intended to reduce disease transmission.

These typically include:

- Controlled property access
- Visitor declarations
- Vehicle hygiene
- Footwear disinfection

- Protective clothing
- Movement records.

Activists entering multiple livestock properties without following these protocols create a theoretical pathway for disease transmission, regardless of their intentions.

The Australian Parliament's inquiry into agricultural protection heard evidence from Australian Pork Limited that many producers considered activist incursions to represent significant biosecurity threats.

Producers also reported livestock stress, financial losses and, in some cases, disease-related impacts following incursions, though some of these claims were disputed by activist organisations.

The inquiry nevertheless acknowledged that unauthorised entry increases biosecurity risks and animal stress.

Animal welfare can also be affected

Ironically, illegal entry intended to document welfare concerns may itself disturb livestock.

Pig behaviour specialists recognise that pigs are highly responsive to unfamiliar people, lighting and noise.

Entering breeding or farrowing facilities during the night can alter normal behaviour and increase stress.

Evidence presented to the Senate inquiry included producer reports of:

- Abortions and stillbirths in pregnant sows

- A sow suffering a fractured leg requiring euthanasia

- Piglets dying following disturbance during activist incursions

- Increased agitation among breeding animals.

While activist groups disputed whether sufficient evidence linked these outcomes directly to trespass events, animal health experts appearing before the inquiry agreed that unauthorised entry has the potential to increase stress in pigs and compromise biosecurity.

High-profile farm incursions

The 2019 incursion of Beerburrrum Pigery in Queensland was one of Australia's highest-profile pig farm invasions.

Approximately 100 activists gathered at the property, with around 30 entering the piggery while others remained outside.

The operation reportedly forced the facility into lockdown and generated widespread media attention.

The incident became a catalyst for debate surrounding Australia's trespass laws and online publication of farm locations.

In 2025, activist groups released footage allegedly obtained through unauthorised entry onto several Victorian pig farms.

While Agriculture Victoria investigated the welfare allegations, industry representatives simultaneously condemned the illegal trespass, arguing that the incursions endangered animal welfare through biosecurity breaches and caused ongoing trauma for

farming families and employees.

Social media amplifies the harm

Today's activist campaigns often extend well beyond the initial trespass.

Video footage may be:

- Selectively edited
- Distributed internationally within hours
- Accompanied by producer names and farm locations
- Shared repeatedly across social media platforms.

Farmers frequently report receiving threatening emails, abusive phone calls and online harassment following publication.

For many producers, the reputational damage continues long after any official investigation concludes.

A delicate balance

None of this diminishes the importance of legitimate animal welfare oversight.

Where evidence suggests cruelty or breaches of welfare legislation, independent authorities – including state agriculture departments and the RSPCA where appropriate – have established legal powers to investigate.

The challenge lies in balancing two important public interests – maintaining transparency and accountability in livestock production with protecting farmers, livestock and regional communities from unlawful trespass and unnecessary biosecurity risks.

These goals need not be mutually exclusive.

Building trust rather than conflict

Many Australian pig producers have responded by increasing transparency through:

- School and community engagement
- Virtual farm tours
- Participation in quality assurance programs
- Independent auditing

- Stronger communication about animal welfare standards.

Constructive engagement generally achieves more than confrontation.

Likewise, producers benefit from maintaining comprehensive welfare records, documenting veterinary care and ensuring staff receive ongoing training, enabling farms to demonstrate compliance whenever legitimate concerns arise.

Looking forward

Animal welfare will remain a central issue for Australian agriculture.

Consumers rightly expect high standards and producers increasingly recognise that maintaining community trust requires openness and continuous improvement.

At the same time, illegal trespass imposes real costs – not only through biosecurity risk and operational disruption but also through its effect on the mental health of farming families and staff who already operate in a demanding environment.

The conversation about Australian pig farming should ultimately be based on evidence, transparency and lawful oversight rather than fear, intimidation or confrontation.

Respect for both animal welfare and the people who dedicate their lives to caring for livestock offers the strongest foundation for maintaining public confidence in Australian pork production. 🐷



Scan for links to mental health support.

**Australian
Pork**

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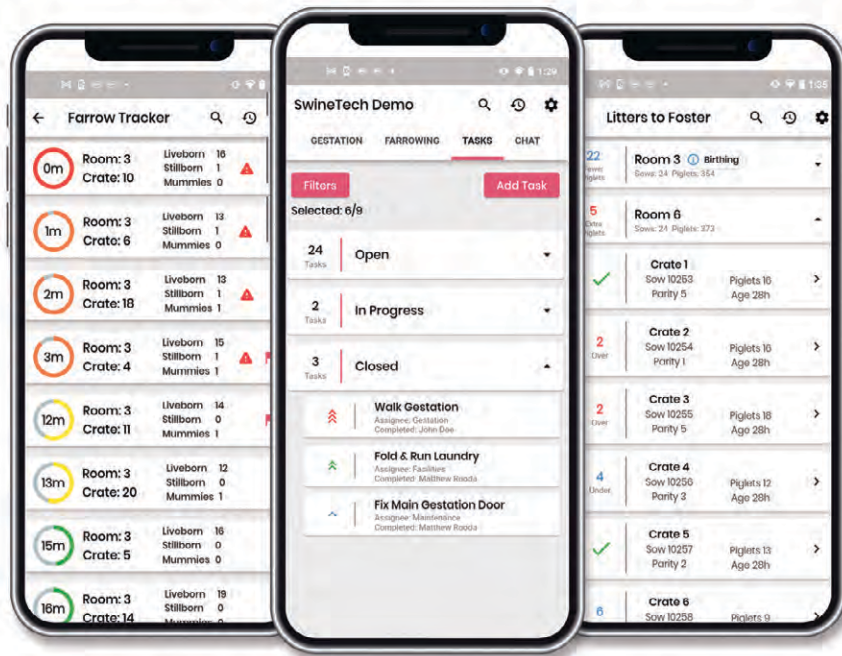


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In the late 1990s, researchers recognised grain protein and moisture could be measured easily but the nutrient that drives both feed cost and animal performance – energy – was much harder to assess accurately.

Celebrating 10 years of AusScan

THIS year marks a major milestone for AusScan, celebrating 10 years as a commercial enterprise.

Since the launch of AusScan Online in 2015, the platform has grown from a research-driven concept into a globally recognised feed evaluation tool, helping nutritionists, feed manufacturers and producers make more informed decisions about ingredient quality.

Today, AusScan supports more than 90,000 scans annually and is used in 69 countries, providing fast reliable feed quality information when and where it's needed.

While AusScan Online has been operating for the past decade, the science behind it dates back much further.

In the late 1990s, the foundations were laid when researchers recognised a major challenge facing livestock producers.

Grain protein and moisture could be measured easily but the nutrient that drives both feed cost and animal performance – energy – was much harder to assess accurately.

As a result, nutritionists often relied on pub-

lished reference values, despite knowing that the energy value of cereal grain could vary greatly between seasons, regions and growing conditions.

The breakthrough came when researchers successfully linked near-infrared reflectance spectroscopy technology with in vivo animal trial data.

By combining extensive animal digestibility studies with NIR scanning, AusScan developed the world's first calibrations capable of predicting pig digestible energy, poultry apparent metabolisable energy and cattle metabolisable energy.

AusScan also pioneered reactive lysine calibrations for soybean meal and canola meal, providing a practical way to assess heat damage and gain a better understanding of available lysine.

What makes AusScan unique is that these calibrations are built on thousands of reference samples collected across multiple locations, seasons and production systems.

Importantly, they reflect real-world conditions, incorporating grain affected by drought, frost, wet weather and other envi-

ronmental influences.

This extensive dataset has helped make AusScan a robust and reliable tool for commercial use.

Accurate nutrient assessment has never been more important.

In pig and poultry diets, even small differences in energy content can significantly impact on both animal performance and feed costs.

When grain prices are high, a difference of only 1MJ DE/kg can represent an additional \$30 to \$40 per tonne of feed.

By helping nutritionists measure the quality of ingredients before they enter the feed mill or reach the farm, AusScan supports more precise formulations and greater confidence in feed decisions.

Continuous improvement has been central to the AusScan program.

Following the early research breakthroughs, development accelerated through long-term industry investment from the Pork CRC and Australasian Pork Research Institute Limited, helping transform decades of scientific research into practical tools for industry.

More recent develop-

ments include updated broiler AME calibrations in 2024 and completion of layer AME calibrations in 2025.

The most recent calibration in 2026 updated pig DE calibrations, which included predominantly maize samples and expanded maize datasets.

These ongoing investments ensure AusScan continues to evolve alongside changing ingredients, production systems and animal genetics.

Ten years after becoming a commercial service, AusScan continues to deliver on its original vision – helping the industry move beyond relying on average values and make decisions based on the true quality of their ingredients.

By turning decades of research into practical real-time information, AusScan has helped nutritionists formulate with precision and improve pig production efficiencies.

Happy tenth anniversary AusScan. 🐷

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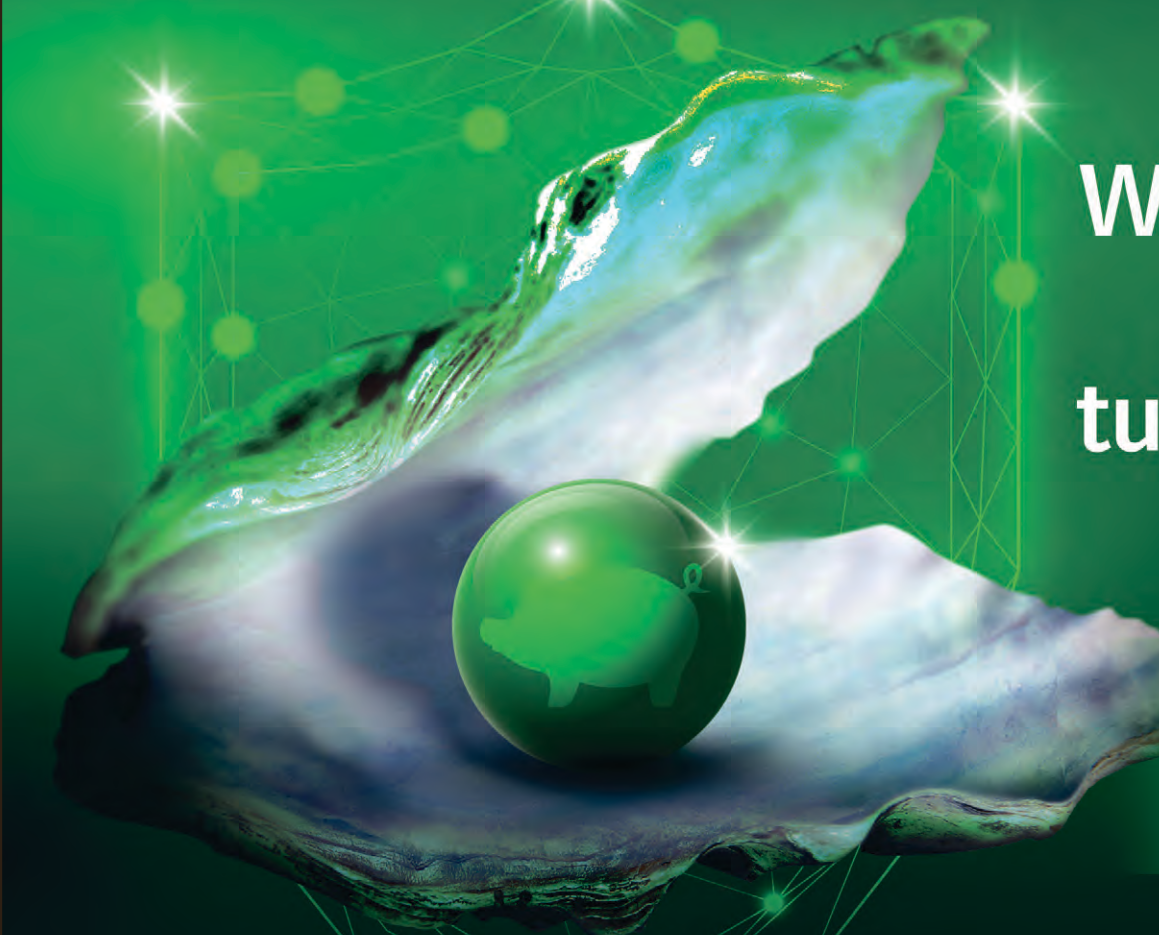


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Feral pigs in a trap. Photo: NSW Local Land Services

Behavioural responses of feral pigs to culling

NEW research is shedding light on how feral pigs respond to different management methods and why the choice of control method matters for land managers.

At the 2026 International Wild Pig Conference, Kelly Koriakin – from the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Centre – presented findings from a study conducted in Texas that examined whether intensive feral pig control could change animal behaviour in ways that might affect management outcomes.

A total of 122 GPS-collared feral pigs were tracked across a 225sq km area in Texas between November 2022 and July 2023.

This area was randomly divided into four zones, with each zone allocated to one of four control methods – aerial shooting, trapping, baiting (using an experimental toxic bait) or no control.

The movement behaviour of collared feral pigs (24 in aerial shooting, 29 trapping, 27 in baiting and 22 in control) within each of these zones was then evaluated before and after each control method was applied.

Aerial shooting involved the use of two helicopters over three days.

Trapping efforts involved the use of box traps, corral traps and net traps with whole sounders targeted for removal using corn as the free feed.

Baiting also involved free feeding of



by **HEATHER CHANNON**
National Feral Pig
Management Coordinator



corn to attract feral pigs to bait sites.

Home-range size, shifts in home range, how quickly feral pigs travelled, distance travelled, number of unique contacts and the duration of contact with other feral pigs were evaluated for all collared animals exposed to one of the four control methods.

It is important to note that no feral pig was exposed to more than one control method.

Interestingly, it was found that different control methods led to different responses by collared feral pigs.

It was shown that culling method mattered.

Aerial shooting resulted in a relatively limited behavioural change, with a decrease in speed after operations, yet no other significant changes in movement or contact were observed.

The deployment of the experimental toxic bait was associated with smaller home-range size, greater shifts in home range and increased distance travelled during deployment.

Trapping produced the strongest behavioural response, with increased distance travelled during and after trapping, as well as increased duration and degree of contact

with other feral pigs.

Differences in feral pig behavioural responses may have been due to three operational factors that varied between the control methods – the level of ground disturbance, the amount of baiting used and the duration of the activity.

This may be why trapping produced the strongest behavioural response, baiting produced an intermediate response and aerial control produced the least response in collared feral pigs.

Trapping resulted in the most pronounced changes as it involved the greatest level of repeated human activity on the ground.

Trapping is labour intensive, requiring land managers to maintain free-feeding sites as well as build, maintain and monitor traps over an extended period.

It was considered that sustained disturbance combined with concentrating food into specific areas could have altered pig movement and social behaviour by drawing animals into these areas, disrupting normal movement patterns and increasing the likelihood of contact between surviving individuals.

continued P7

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Behavioural responses of feral pigs to culling

from P6

As trapping continued for 76 days, feral pigs in the trapping area were exposed to disturbance for much longer than those in the other treatment areas.

This may have allowed behavioural changes to accumulate or persist beyond the active removal period.

As a result, trapping was linked with increased distance travelled during and after operations, as well as increased contact duration and contact degree – both of which are highly relevant for disease transmission risk.

Baiting shared some similarities with trapping as it also involved repeated ground-based activity to attract animals to bait sites and then condition them to consume the toxicant.

These activities likely created enough disturbance and bait-associated movement to influence pig behaviour, including increased home range shifting and increased distance travelled

during deployment.

However, the duration of this treatment was shorter, lasting for around 20 days.

This shorter duration may have limited the scale of the behavioural response.

Aerial shooting had the least impact on feral pig behaviour in this study.

While helicopters are noisy and may cause short-term disturbance, the aerial operation only lasted for three days, involved little or no ground-based disturbance and did not require free feeding.

This may be why the only clear behavioural change reported was a reduction in speed in the movement of feral pigs after aerial operations, with no major changes in home range, movement distance or contact metrics highlighted.

Overall, these differences reflect the intensity, type and duration of disturbance created by each method.

Where significant ground-based ac-

tivity is undertaken for longer periods, feral pig movement and contact patterns may be more likely to change.

Methods that increase movement or contact among survivors may unintentionally increase disease transmission risk or promote dispersal, even when they successfully reduce pig numbers.

In the event of responding to a disease incursion, this work highlighted that the method that involves little to no ground-based disturbance, such as aerial shooting, should be considered first to rapidly reduce populations, minimise risks of pigs dispersing and not undermine biosecurity goals.

Ideally, such activity would then be followed by other on-ground methods that may be more disruptive to feral pigs (such as trapping, baiting and/or ground shooting).

No single control tool should be used in isolation.

Importantly, these outcomes reinforce

that effective feral pig management is dependent on good planning, being well timed and being coordinated with neighbours, especially where disease risk is a concern.

Similarly, recent Australian research led by Andrew Bengsen from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development found that aerial shooting did not cause feral pigs to disperse from targeted areas and therefore increase the risk of disease spread.

It was concluded that aerial shooting has a place in Australia as a primary method for managing feral pig populations and should be used as required in emergency animal disease response operations.

If you'd like to discuss the content of this article or have any questions related to effective feral pig management and monitoring, contact me on Heather.Channon@feralpigs.com.au or 0423 056 045.



The second Improvac vaccination could be administered 2-5 weeks before slaughter with little risk of adverse impacts.

Improvac timing offers flexibility for producers

A LARGE-scale Australian study has confirmed that producers have considerable flexibility in the timing of the second Improvac vaccination, without compromising pig performance, pork quality or profitability.

Researchers from the University of Melbourne and SunPork Group evaluated 1056 commercial male pigs across a range of live-weights and administered the second vaccination either 2, 3, 4 or 5 weeks before slaughter.

The results were reassuringly consistent.

Growth performance, feed efficiency and carcass characteristics were largely unaffected by vaccination timing.

While pigs slaughtered two weeks after

the second vaccination tended to have slightly lower P2 backfat, the difference was small and not likely to have a major commercial impact.

Importantly, changing the timing of the second vaccination had no effect on objective measures of pork-eating quality, including tenderness, colour and water-holding capacity.

Consumer testing also showed no differences in odour perception between pigs vaccinated 2, 3, 4 or 5 weeks before slaughter.

In contrast, fat from entire boars was clearly rated less favourably, confirming the effectiveness of immunocastration in managing boar taint.

From an economic perspective, vaccina-

tion timing had little effect on carcass value or net margin.

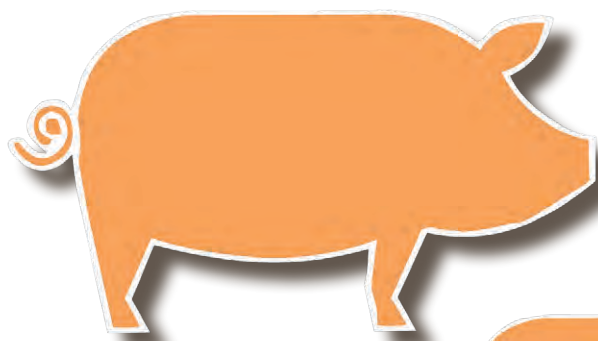
The main takeaway of these findings for producers was that the second Improvac vaccination could be administered 2-5 weeks before slaughter with little risk of adverse impacts on performance, pork quality, boar taint control or overall profitability.

This provides valuable flexibility to accommodate variations in pig growth rates, marketing schedules and processing arrangements.

For more information about this project, contact Dr Vaibhav Gole, program manager integrity and product quality at APL. **Australian Pork Limited**



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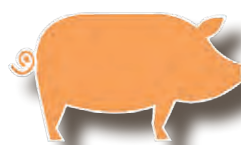
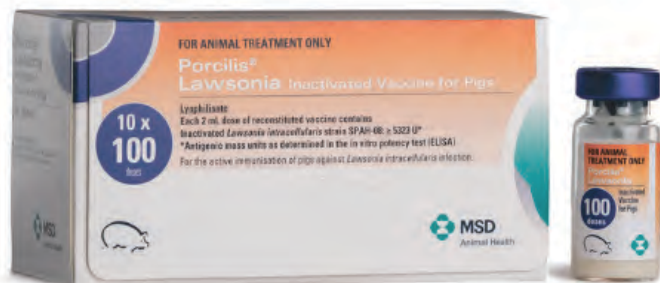
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Transforming complex disease data into practical on-farm insights

AN Australia Pork Limited-funded project led by Aquila Scientific to develop a genomic reporting tool for porcine bacterial pathogens has now been completed, delivering a proof-of-concept platform designed specifically for the Australian pork industry.

The project explored how genomic and laboratory testing data can be brought together into a single digital platform, allowing veterinarians and producers to manage sample submissions, monitor testing progress and securely access diagnostic re-

sults and reports.

The platform is designed to provide information on bacterial identification, antimicrobial resistance genes, virulence factors and serotypes, helping support disease management decisions.

If adopted more broadly in the future, this type of technology could provide producers, veterinarians and farm managers with access to farm-specific diagnostic information through a single easy-to-use portal.

Bringing laboratory results and antimicrobial susceptibility information together in one place

has the potential to support faster disease investigations, more informed treatment decisions and improved on-farm disease management.

While genomic data can be highly technical, the project demonstrates how complex laboratory and genome information can be translated into practical insights for industry.

Tools such as this have the potential to strengthen antimicrobial stewardship, support disease surveillance and improve industry preparedness for emerging health challenges.

The project highlights the opportunities for digital and genomic technologies to support pig health and productivity across the Australian pork industry.

For more information on this project, contact Aquila Scientific director Dr Sam Abraham on sam.abraham@aquilascientific.com.au

Australian Pork Limited



This technology could provide producers, veterinarians and farm managers with access to farm-specific diagnostic information through a single easy-to-use portal.

Farrowing flaws must be addressed

RSPCA Update in late May featured interesting commentary on pig nest building and maternal care.

Long bemused by how and why natural behaviours are so often compromised when it comes to intensive/industrial farming, I thought such an important topic was worth sharing with readers of this publication, especially those not familiar with conventional (intensive) pig farming systems, and maybe by way of a reminder for others.

So, here goes... the following is what the RSPCA believes.

In the days leading up to giving birth, pregnant sows prepare a comfortable safe environment for their young.

They are driven to root, dig, turn and build a nest using available materials to create a safe space for their piglets.

This behaviour is triggered by hormonal changes in their bodies and plays an important role for preparing them for motherhood.

In most conventional farming systems, however, pregnant pigs (gilts or sows) are confined to farrowing crates in the days leading up to birth and

throughout early motherhood.

A farrowing crate, also known as a 'piglet protection pen', is a metal-barred crate similar in size to a sow stall but slightly narrower.

Around a week before farrowing, the sow is moved into a farrowing crate and kept there until her piglets are weaned at about three to four weeks of age.

While in the crate, the sow can stand up and take a step forward or backwards but she is unable to turn around.

Pigs are extraordinarily clever and social animals, forming strong bonds with one another and becoming stressed when alone.

For this reason, housing pigs in groups is a key factor in providing a positive environment for them.

Being able to socially interact is important enrichment for pigs and, just like us, each

pig has unique personality traits, with some more vocal and rambunctious and others more laid-back in nature.

Pregnant sows are unable to perform instinctual nesting behaviours in farrowing crates as they can't move freely and are not provided with bedding or nesting material.

Farrowing crates have also been shown to increase stress and impair the pig's ability to rest properly, to control body temperature during farrowing, increasing the risk of heat stress as well as being associated with an increased number of stillbirths and negative maternal behaviours.

RSPCA is opposed to the use of farrowing crates, as these systems significantly restrict movement and prevent sows from expressing key maternal behaviours.

Moving towards free-farrowing systems would represent an important step forward for the Australian pig industry, allowing for better alignment between animal welfare and farming practices.

There are several alternative farrowing systems to traditional farrowing crates, where sows may be confined for a shorter period or not confined at all.

Temporary crating systems confine sows immediately prior to and during farrowing, as well as for the first few days after farrowing, but are then opened to allow the sow more freedom to move.

These temporary crating systems confine sows during this time to minimise the risk of piglet mortality due to crushing, which is most likely to occur during farrowing and in the first two-to-three days after farrowing.

However, immediately before farrowing is also the period that a sow is most motivated to perform nest building behaviours and thus can become frustrated if unable to move around and access nesting materials.

◀ continued P9



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Outdoor piglet feeding frenzy. Happy (so so) sow.



Opening a group housing solutions workshop in October 2012, Pork CRC CEO Dr Roger Campbell suggested that what really counted was how space was used and how sows were managed. The workshops in Toowoomba and Melbourne aligned with Pork CRC Program 1, 'Confinement Free Sow and Piglet Management', which addressed the significant industry decision to voluntarily phase-out sow gestation stalls by 2017 and some retailer requests to be stall-free even earlier.



Relaxed sow and piglets.

Farrowing flaws must be addressed

from P8

During and immediately after farrowing are the periods that sows are likely to perform comfort behaviours to ease the pain from farrowing and interact with their piglets to establish a maternal bond, which they are also unable to easily do when confined in a farrowing crate.

Alternative farrowing systems – where the sow is not confined at all and able to move freely – include individual or group farrowing pens with or without group suckling of piglets (used in indoor systems), indoor farrowing pens with access to an outdoor area and outdoor farrowing huts located in paddocks (free-range or outdoor-bred systems).

Gilts/sows in free-farrowing systems, where they are not confined, have been shown to display less abnormal behaviours and less pain during farrowing.

Providing freedom to move during farrowing and lactation also encourages maternal interactions with piglets and may encourage more natural nursing and weaning of piglets.

Providing sows with suitable nesting material is critical for their welfare.

For example, providing straw prior to farrowing so that they can perform nesting behaviours can decrease stress and pain levels in sows, as well as improve piglet survival and development.

Further, to allow for innate foraging behaviour, sows in farrowing crates should be provided with appropriate foraging material that are edible and/or otherwise satisfy the sow's need to chew, investigate and manipulate objects and substrates in her environment.

While alternative farrowing systems currently available are often associated with slightly higher piglet mortality rates than traditional farrowing crates, they can significantly improve

sow welfare during gestation, farrowing and lactation until weaning.

The improvements in animal welfare can also benefit piglet welfare in the long term, improving piglet development and behaviour (for example, increased weight gain and decreased aggressive damaging behaviours towards other pigs), which can lead to improved production performance overall.

Alternative farrowing systems should balance the welfare needs of sows and piglets, by providing sows freedom to move and perform natural nesting and maternal behaviours, while also protecting piglets and minimising the risk of piglet mortality.

While temporary crating systems have some welfare benefits, they still confine sows during the critical periods before, during and after farrowing, where sows are most motivated to perform innate behaviours including nesting and maternal interactions with piglets.

Therefore, for alternative farrowing systems to meaningfully improve sow welfare, they should not confine sows at any point during gestation, farrowing and lactation until weaning.

In my personal view, surely putting the sow's needs first and foremost when it comes to designing and implementing production systems should be front of mind.

Sadly, this continues to not be the case, with only miniscule positive adjustments to sow's lives being researched or instigated when housed in conventional production systems.

I acknowledge much of the quandary boils down to how best to keep the lid on cost of production.

I suspect however that as consumers become more aware of the now well-exposed contentious issues surrounding sub-standard farm and processor procedures, they will

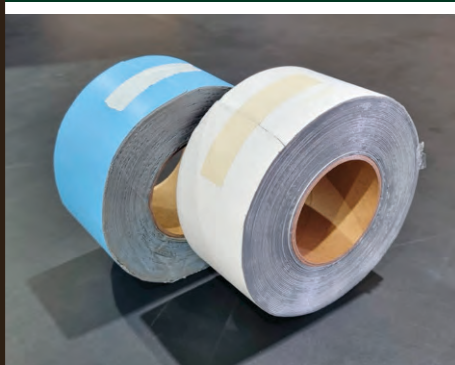
look to purchase their pork from pigs farmed in more sustainable higher-welfare farming systems.

On top of that, such consumers by necessity may even become willing to pay a premium for just that.

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Bird flu facts from Dr Ron Granville

YOU'VE probably seen the media reports about H5 bird flu being detected in Australia and perhaps wondered about its significance.

I've had a look through comments associated with mainstream news articles posted on Facebook.

The level of ignorance and cynicism on display is astounding.

Conspiracy theorists seem to be out in force, so I thought I'd try to do my bit to counter all the rubbish.

Here are the facts as I know them.

Sorry for the length – it's not a simple story.

Firstly, a bit about influenza viruses generally.

There are many hundreds of strains or subtypes of influenza viruses worldwide, and they tend to have relatively limited host ranges (species they infect).

Flu viruses are normally differentiated by two distinct proteins found on the surface of the influenza A virus – H for hemagglutinin and N for neuraminidase.

So, for example, the two most common seasonal flu viruses infecting people are H1N1 and H3N2.

They can occasionally 'spillover' into species such as pigs but not commonly.

The 2007 equine influenza outbreak was caused by H3N8, which only infects horses, donkeys and such, and the occasional dog.

The poultry outbreaks in Australia in 2020, 2024 and 2025 were caused by H7N7, H7N3, H7N9 and H7N8 strains.

Influenza viruses have a tremendous ability to change their genetic makeup through either antigenic drift (mutations) or antigenic reassortment – if two different flu viruses infect the same cell at the same time, their gene segments can mix and match, creat-

ing a new virus.

The current concern is with highly pathogenic avian influenza subtype H5N1, which the media has been referring to as H5 bird flu.

However, this is a bit simplistic.

There are around 10 branches/groups of the H5N1 family, called clades and also numerous sub-clades.

Currently we are mainly worried about only one of these – H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b.

It has a very wide host range and causes serious illness or death.

This virus first appeared in 2020, probably through reassortment and ongoing mutation of other H5 viruses.

Since 2021, HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b has spread rapidly across the world, except for Australia and New Zealand due to our isolation.

It has caused mass mortalities in wild birds, poultry and some marine mammal populations.

All bird species are thought to be susceptible to this strain, and it has been detected in over 100 species of mammals – wild, domestic, terrestrial and aquatic.

The rapid spread across and between countries is primarily associated with the movement of wild birds.

The global H5N1 HPAI outbreaks differ from previous outbreaks of HPAI by their:

- Rapid global spread
- Large number of outbreaks
- Increased severity of illness
- High mortality rates in wild birds and some mammalian species
- Wider host and geographical range
- Longer persistence of virus and/or repeated exposure.

In the order of 30-40 million plus domestic poultry in Europe and 90 million in the

US have died or been culled because of ongoing outbreaks.

Apart from wild and domestic birds, HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b has been confirmed in dairy cattle, pigs, cats, alpacas and goats in the US, farmed mink and dairy cattle in Europe and sheep in the United Kingdom.

In the US, it has affected hundreds of dairy herds across the country, causing severe illness.

Pigs, alpaca and goats are only mildly affected.

As the virus spread south through South America, it caused large scale mortalities in sea lions and seals along both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

It eventually spread to the Antarctic.

Human cases have been reported following close contact with infected poultry, dairy cows or raw (unpasteurised) milk.

However, there have been only a very small number of human deaths.

The World Health Organisation has assessed it as a low public health risk, yet care should still be taken with potentially infected animals.

Late last year this virus was detected in several species on Heard Island, including the southern elephant seal, the Antarctic fur seal and the gentoo penguin.

This island lies over 4000km southwest of Perth and is part of the

remote sub-Antarctic Australian external territory.

It appears to have killed around 13,000 seal pups there.

The current concern relates primarily to migratory (pelagic) birds found infected in WA, South Australia, NSW and Queensland.

Whether these are isolated cases or the tip of the iceberg, only time will tell.

However, there is a real worry that H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b could hugely impact native bird species if it gets a foothold – which it could do, for example, through scavenging by native birds and/or animals.

Once established, it would be impossible to control.

The only option for domestic poultry farms would be to keep the birds isolated as much as possible from wild birds.

This possibly means that free range poultry production may have to cease.

So, ignore the conspiracy theorists.

This virus is a 'clear and present danger' to both our domestic birds and our wildlife populations.

The impacts could be devastating and could even cause extinction of some threatened species.

I'm just hoping that it doesn't take hold.

Dr Ron Granville
Principal
Consultant
Biosecurity Advisory Service



Wildlife teams assessing the site of a mass mortality of southern elephant seals on Heard Island. Photo: Julie McInnes



Antarctic fur seals on Heard Island tested positive during research voyages by the Australian Antarctic Program. Photo: Hugo Sykes

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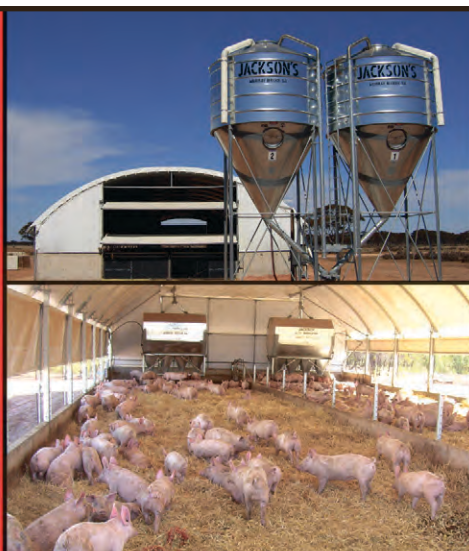


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Aussie Sizzler delivers superior shed hygiene

MAINTAINING high standards of hygiene is the most important responsibility in any piggery.

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From farrowing sheds and grower pens to loading ramps and equipment, producers need reliable cleaning equipment that can tackle demanding washdown tasks daily.

To meet these challenges, Aussie Pumps has developed the Aussie Sizzler, a compact hot-water pressure cleaner designed to deliver fast, effective and economical cleaning for livestock applications.

The Aussie Sizzler combines high-pressure cleaning with the added power of hot water to remove stubborn dirt, grease, manure and organic build-up.

Aussie Pumps chief engineer John Hales said, "Our focus has always been to provide equipment that helps producers maintain the highest hygiene standards while keeping operating costs under control."

"The Sizzler has been developed with feedback from Australian livestock producers to ensure it delivers the performance and reliability they need."

The machine produces 1800psi (130 bar) of pressure with a flow rate of 10LPM.

It delivers excellent cleaning performance for sheds, flooring, equipment and livestock facilities.

Water temperatures of up to 80C help loosen grease and organic matter while assisting in reducing bacterial contamination during washdown.

Despite its robust construction, the Aussie Sizzler is designed for

easy handling around the farm.

Four flat-free wheels, an integrated handle and a compact footprint allow the operator to move the machine easily between sheds.

A full stainless-steel cover provides excellent corrosion resistance, making it well suited to the demanding conditions commonly found in livestock environments.

At the heart of the machine is a heavy-duty 1450rpm four-pole electric motor driving a premium Italian triplex pump fitted with ceramic pistons.

The slow-speed design helps maximise service life while reducing maintenance requirements.

It provides producers with dependable performance.

Safety has also been given a high priority.

The Sizzler features delayed total stop, automatically shutting down 30 seconds after the trigger is released.

That helps reduce fuel consumption and equipment wear.

Additional protection systems include dry running protection, clogged nozzle control, micro-leak detection and intelligent automatic shutdown, all designed to protect both the operator and the machine.

For farm owners requiring greater cleaning versatility, optional accessories include turbo lances for removing heavy deposits and flat surface cleaners for large concrete areas.

A stainless-steel roll frame or foaming attachment for applying detergents and sanitisers efficiently across livestock facilities are also available.

For larger operations and processing facilities, Aussie offers hot-water pressure cleaners delivering 3000 to 4000psi and steam cleaning up to 130C.

These machines



The Aussie Sizzler delivers 80C at 1800psi. Used with a turbo, it's effective working pressure is 3100psi. All this from a 240V 2.7kW single-phase motor.

www.porknews.com.au

are available in both single-phase and three-phase configurations to suit a wide variety of applications.

The Aussie Sizzler provides pork producers with an effective solution for improving hygiene, supporting biosecurity programs and reducing cleaning time across the farm.

Aussie Pumps offer discounts to bonafide pork producers.

For more information, contact Aussie Pumps on (02) 8865 3500 or visit aussiepumps.com.au

Aussie Pumps

Transport trucks move more than pigs

TRANSPORT trucks are a vital part of pig production, moving animals between farms, production sites and processing facilities.

And they are more than a logistics tool.

They constantly move between pigs, ramps, wash bays, equipment, drivers and different sites.

Every step creates a chance to pick up and spread contamination, often with no visible signs.

When transport biosecurity is discussed, the focus often lands on whether a truck has been cleaned and disinfected, yet the real risk is broader

than the trailer floor alone.

Loading and unloading areas, driver movement, equipment handling, washdown quality and contact with contaminated environments can all contribute to disease spread.

Transport can also be viewed as a surveillance opportunity.

Environmental sampling from trucks can help identify pathogens circulating through a production system, giving producers better visibility of what may be moving between sites.

A range of surveillance tools are available to support that approach.

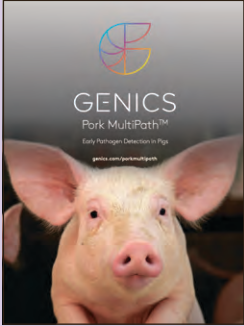
One example is Genics Pork MultiPath, which can detect multiple respiratory and enteric pathogens from a single sample.

Developed with support from Australian Pork Limited research investment, this highly sensitive

and specific pathogen detection tool helps to strengthen disease monitoring and surveillance across pig production systems.

To learn more about the Genics Pork MultiPath, visit the Genics website by scanning the QR code below.

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Denmark's new ministerial role

THE Danish national election was held on the March 24 this year, with no clear majority at the time.

After months of negotiations between the parties, a new centre left coalition was formed with Mette Frederiksen continuing as the Prime Minister in her third term of office, leading a government that has shifted more to the left.

As outlined in my May article, the pig industry dominated in the election campaigns of the majority of parties, from both environmental and welfare perspectives.

This has been answered by the newly formed government, with the minister for agriculture role replaced by a minister for nature and animal welfare, signalling a stricter approach to the pig industry and green transition for all agricultural commodities.

The ministry for nature and animal welfare role will be headed by social democrat Christian Raberg Madsen, who will take over responsibilities previously held under the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries,

Nordic
News
by ASHLEY NORVAL



formerly led by Jacob Jensen, member of Venstre, Denmark's Liberal Party.

It is the first time in 130 years that Denmark will not have a dedicated agricultural minister and is the first country in the European Union without a dedicated ministry for the agri-food sector.

This is in contradiction to the general approach of the EU, which has had more of a focus on food security.

The Danish agricultural portfolio will be distributed between five ministries under the new government:

- Ministry for Nature and Animal Welfare – overseeing the traditional farming policies and industry
- Ministry for the Environment – overseeing fisheries and environmental regulation
- Ministry of Justice – responsible for

enforcing the Animal Welfare Act

- Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs – managing food safety, health, food supply and the Plant-Based Foods Fund.
- Ministry of Transport – will handle any residual duties, including the specific compensation related to the closure of the Danish mink farming industry.

Upon the announcement of the new government, Mette Frederiksen said that the new administration would address the needs of “the people who are in Denmark and for the generations to come and also for the animals” and will create a commission to “comprehensively restructure” the pig sector.

The roadmap for such a restructure or what that entails remains as yet unclear.

Farewell to major pork industry figure

DOCTOR Robert van Barneveld has stepped down as group chief executive officer and managing director of SunPork, bringing to a close more than a decade of leadership and contribution to the Australian pork industry.

Rob joined SunPork in 2013 as chair of the Board before becoming the company's inaugural group CEO and MD in 2016.

During his time with SunPork, he became a prominent figure across Australian agriculture, combining his background as a scientist with a strong focus on research, innovation, commercial development, animal welfare and industry collaboration.

His influence has extended well beyond SunPork and pork production.

Rob has been closely involved in the development of Autism CRC, helping to develop the concept and program, and leading the successful bid for Commonwealth funding.

He became chair of Autism CRC in 2017, a position he held until June 30 this year.

That work also found a practical connection with agriculture

through SunPork's Autism and Agriculture program, which created employment opportunities for autistic adults in specialist animal-care roles at the company's Queensland piggeries.

The program was developed through collaboration between SunPork Farms, Autism CRC, the CRC for High Integrity Australian Pork and Specialisterne Australia.

It demonstrated how agriculture could create meaningful employment opportunities by recognising and harnessing the strengths of autistic workers.

For many in the Australian pork industry, however, one of Rob's most significant contributions has been his investment in people.

He has played an important role in mentoring and developing the next generation of industry leaders, sharing his knowledge and experience, and encouraging others to take on greater roles within the sector.

His career has also been closely linked with pork research and innovation.

Rob has worked as a researcher within several cooperative

research centres and served as a director of the Pork CRC, while continuing to support research commercialisation and industry development.

Rob's departure marks the end of an era for SunPork and the broader Australian pork industry.

His legacy is one of leadership, scientific thinking, innovation and a willingness to look beyond traditional industry boundaries for new ideas and opportunities.

From advancing pork research and

developing people to championing new approaches to workforce participation through the Autism and Agriculture program, Rob has left his mark on both the pork industry and Australian agriculture more broadly.

As he steps away from the SunPork CEO role, his influence is likely to continue through the people he has mentored, the research and innovation he has supported and the initiatives he has helped establish over more than a decade.



Dr Robert van Barneveld

Gallagher (formerly Tresidder Insurance Brokers)



Brad Tresidder



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Long-term supporter, APL was heavily involved across the event.

2026 ICMJ Competition had strong pork focus

THE 2026 Intercollegiate Meat Judging National Conference and Competition in Wagga Wagga NSW brought together more than 160 participants from Australia, the US and Japan, reinforcing its reputation as the premier pipeline and development program for future red meat industry professionals.

The event combined technical judging competitions, industry workshops, networking opportunities and career development activities, exposing students to every stage of the meat supply chain.

Pork takes centre stage

Pork played a prominent role throughout the 2026 conference, highlighting the industry's priorities and the range of career opportunities across the supply chain.

One of the key technical presentations was delivered by APL's integrity and product quality program manager Dr Vaibhav Gole, highlighting some of the key factors influencing pork-eating quality and how the industry is working to deliver more consistent consumer eating experiences.

Dr Gole explained that muscle pH is a critical driver of pork quality.

High or low ultimate pH – the stable pH level a carcass reaches approximately 24 hours post-mortem – can negatively affect yield, colour, drip loss and overall eating quality.

Factors such as genetics, extended periods of feed, stressful pre-slaughter handling and chiller management can all influence muscle pH and eating quality.

Boar taint, linked to androstenone and skatole, also continues to be a significant cause of consumer rejection due to associated unpleasant odour and flavour.

However, widespread adoption of immunocastration on Aussie farms – about 60 per cent of male pigs – has greatly reduced the risk.

While the pork in-

dustry continues to improve factors within the supply chain, Dr Gole emphasised that overcooking remains the leading cause of poor consumer experiences, often resulting in dry tough pork.

To address this challenge, both consumer education and product innovations such as moisture-infused pork are important, which helps maintain juiciness, reduce the impact of overcooking and deliver a more consistent eating experience even when cooking practices vary.

Beyond the competition itself, students

participated in pork carcass breakdown and utilisation workshops led by Luke Leyson, AMIC's 2026 Young Small Goods Champion.

These sessions focused on value-adding opportunities, product utilisation and maximising carcass value.

Attendees also heard from Black Label Berkshires' Linton Batt, who shared insights into building a premium pork brand and the opportunities that exist within value-added pork production.

Pork judging competition highlights

The pork compo-

nent of the competition tested students' abilities to assess pork carcasses, primal cuts and retail cuts against industry standards for yield, quality and value.

A major highlight was the performance of the University of Queensland, which won the Pork Judging Champion Team title.

APL would like to congratulate all result winners and the ICMJ committee for a very successful 2026 national competition and conference.

Rowena Davis
APL Industry
Capability Manager

Your levies at work

BOTH Australian Pork Limited and Australasian Pork Research Institute Limited are pleased to announce the national pork industry's nine research and development priorities for 2026-27, as determined through the annual Green Paper process.

Shaped by the people who know the industry best, these priorities put producer levies to work across the supply chain, with a focus on productivity and profitability, sustainability, animal well-being, biosecurity and long-term industry resilience.

The Green Paper process, led by the chief scientist for the Australian pork industry, brings together the Pork Industry Insight Panel through a structured framework to identify industry challenges, emerging

opportunities and future research needs.

The 2025 PIIP came together for an online workshop in September 2025 and comprised some APL and APRIL Board members and staff, together with a range of invited producers, processors, researchers and research providers and industry personnel.

Invitees unable to attend also forwarded comments for input to the workshop.

The Green Paper was then developed from this collaborative process by the chief scientist, with the 2026-27 priorities designed to support practical outcomes for producers, processors and the broader pork supply chain.

APL and APRIL are committed to ensuring producers receive a strong return on their levy investment through impactful research and

development, along with meaningful extension.

This process helps ensure research remains focused on what producers actually need, translates into on-farm and supply-chain benefits and supports the sector's ability to respond to changing market, environmental and community expectations.

Research priorities for 2026-27 target the nine priority areas identified as part of the 2025 Green Paper – Environment and Emissions, Feeding and Nutrition, Human Capacity and Society, Data and Information, Pig Genetics, Pig Care and Wellbeing, Pig Health and Antimicrobial Stewardship, Pig Processing and Meat Quality and Retail.

Key research areas for each priority are outlined below.

➔ continued P15

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Sam Custodio
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Livestock Business Segment

Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health Australia Level
1, 78 Waterloo Road
North Ryde, NSW, 2113
Mobile: 0429 269 931
Customer Care: 1800 808 691
E-mail: samuel.custodio@boehringer-ingelheim.com



Rose McFarlane
Regional Key Account Manager - Livestock
Livestock Business Segment

Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health Australia Level
1, 78 Waterloo Road
North Ryde, NSW, 2113
Mobile: 0408 459 356
Customer Care: 1800 808 691
E-mail: rose.mcfarlane@boehringer-ingelheim.com



Dr Peter Bracken
Technical Services Manager ANZ - Livestock
Livestock Business Segment

Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health Australia
Level 1, 78 Waterloo Road
North Ryde, NSW, 2113
Mobile: 0408 422 240
Customer Care: 1800 808 691
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Anton van Schoor
Technical Sales Manager
E a.schoor@nfs.au
0493 150 463

Jill Ramsey
Sales and Relationship Manager
E j.ramsey@nfs.au
0493 220 322

Rob Crawford
Sales and Relationship Manager
E r.crawford@nfs.au
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TOM BRAUN
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Stuart Wilkinson
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Doug Pearson
P +61 408 735 185
E doug.pearson@feedworks.com.au

Terence Sibanda
P +61 448 791 413
E terence.sibanda@feedworks.com.au

Adrian Kelly
P +61 438 187 531
E adrian.kelly@feedworks.com.au

Joshua Mill
P +61 429 498 409
E josh@paxoma.com.au

www.feedworks.com.au

www.paxoma.com.au

Your levies at work as industry sets research agenda for 2026-27

from P13

Environment and Emissions

- Improve water, nutrient and effluent management across farms and processors
- Develop validated odour and emissions assessment and emissions reduction methods
- Explore low-cost gas capture, energy recovery and by-product opportunities.

Feeding and Nutrition

- Optimise breeding herd nutrition to improve piglet viability, lactation and sow longevity
- Improve rapid feed

quality analysis and update nutrient requirements

- Investigate nutrition strategies that improve carcass composition and feed efficiency
- Track feedstock availability, cost and practice trends in Australia and overseas.

Human Capacity and Society

- Use technologies and strategies to address labour challenges
- Provide objective industry information to stakeholders and government
- Strengthen the industry narrative on food

supply, animal welfare and community contribution.

Data and Information

- Automate data capture to improve housing, effluent, labour and pig management
- Apply AI to welfare assessment at key production and processing points.

Pig Genetics

- Assess supply-chain impacts of increasing litter size through benefit-cost analysis
- Accelerate genetic gain and heterotic effects in key industry traits
- Improve under-

standing of genotype-by-environment interactions.

Pig Care and Wellbeing

- Develop practical enrichment options for all production phases
- Improve objective assessment of wellbeing, pain and positive welfare indicators
- Explore feed additives and nutrition strategies that support welfare.

Pig Health and Antimicrobial Stewardship

- Limit reliance on antibiotics through improved medication use,

vaccines and alternatives

- Prevent and manage farm-to-farm disease incursions, including aerosol transmission

- Develop early detection tools for sick pigs and rapid pathogen testing

- Support regional eradication of significant diseases.

Pig Processing and Meat Quality

- Use AI to improve quality control and reduce contamination risks

- Improve yield, reduce waste, lower energy and water costs,

and support compliance

- Develop value-added pork products and sustainable packaging options

- Improve eating quality and better link on-farm factors to final product quality.

Retail

- Assess how weight loss medications may affect pork demand and consumption

- Promote pork's nutritional value

- Develop higher-value fresh Australian pork products.

Together, these priorities provide a clear roadmap for research

that is practical, built around what producers need and aligned with the needs of the whole supply chain and will be reflected in the joint APL/APRIL research calls.

APL will call for industry priority projects on September 1, 2026 and APRIL will call for innovation projects in February 2027.

The full 2025 Green Paper summary is available in the resource library on the APL website.

Dr Rebecca Morrisson
APL GM RI&E

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Andres Ardila
MV, MNatResEcon
Technical Advisor - Swine

Intervet Australia Pty Ltd
Level 1 - Building A, 26 Talavera Road Macquarie Park, NSW, 2113
North Ryde Post Business Centre, Locked Bag 2234
North Ryde, NSW, 1670 Australia
T 1800 033 461
M 0458 794 535
andres.ardila@msd.com



Anke Woeckel
Veterinarian
Technical Marketing - Swine

Intervet Australia Pty Ltd
Level 1 - Building A, 26 Talavera Road Macquarie Park, NSW, 2113
North Ryde Post Business Centre, Locked Bag 2234
North Ryde, NSW, 1670 Australia
T 1800 033 461
M 0437 010 683
anke.woeckel@msd.com



Luke Goldthorpe
Key Account Manager - Swine

Intervet Australia Pty Ltd
Level 1 - Building A, 26 Talavera Road Macquarie Park, NSW, 2113
North Ryde Post Business Centre, Locked Bag 2234
North Ryde, NSW, 1670 Australia
T 1800 033 461
M 0409 350 527
luke.goldthorpe@msd.com



Altech LIENERT

Regional Sales Representatives

Brian Warneke (SA)
Tel: 0436 193 253

Shane Walker (Vic)
Tel: 0437 056 369

Vin Modra (SA)
Tel: 0407 723 679

Shane Nicholson (National)
Tel: 0427 200 262

Linda Scotts (NSW)
Tel: 0428 972 599

Vereena Rooney - Biosecurity
Tel: 0429 033 492

Bruce Lockwood (Qld)
Tel: 0400 700 559

Winston Cheng (Qld)
Tel: 0429 200 444

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Nathan Lister - Technical Services Manager
Mob: 0438 190 388 | nlist@lallemand.com

Alex Turney - Managing Director, AUS & NZ
Mob: 0419 005 511 | aturney@lallemand.com

www.lallemandanimalnutrition.com



PIC Australia

Clark Forbes, National Business Manager
M: 0427 909 361 E: cforbes@picaustralia.com.au

Joseph Pranilla, Technical Services Manager, WA
M: 0436 912 671 E: jpranilla@picaustralia.com.au

Dr Pat Mitchell, Genetic Services Manager
M: 0402 794 912 E: patricia.mitchell@picaustralia.com.au

Valentin Cusnir, Field Services Manager, Qld
M: 0487 263 466 E: vcusnir@picaustralia.com.au

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Casey van der Bergh
M: +61 488 144 194
E: casey.van-der-bergh@dsm-firmenich.com

Emma Bradbury
M: +61 487 268 869
E: emma.bradbury@dsm-firmenich.com

Milad Manafi
M: +61 456 895 984
E: milad.manafi@dsm-firmenich.com

Tanja Carlitz
M: +61 432 820 861
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Nathan Odell
Chief Supply Chain Officer
M 0412 821 358
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Bjorn Ludvigsen
Livestock & Farm Assurance Manager
M 0479 181 943
E bludvigsen@becampbell.com.au

Ray Quinn
Procurement Manager Meat & Livestock
M 0410 699 971
E rquinn@becampbell.com.au

www.becampbell.com.au

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PIETER STEYN
National Key Account Manager

M 0408 242 141

E pieter@auspacingredients.com.au

CUSTOMER CARE: 02 6762 7708

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VAUCLUSE & APS
117 Chapman Rd, Inglewood, SA 5133

David Reu
MOBILE: 0427 791 734
EMAIL: davidreu@vaucluse-aps.com.au

PH: 08 8380 5672 FAX: 08 8380 5176
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KEMIN (AUST.) PTY. LIMITED
694 Pacific Highway,
Suites 7, Killara NSW 2071, Australia
Office: +61 2 9844 5700
Website: www.kemin.com

Greg Heeney
Sales Manager - Monogastric & Milling
Greg.Heeney@kemin.com
Mobile: +61 456 294 643

Dr. David Isaac
Technical Sales Manager (ANZ)
David.Isaac@kemin.com
Mobile: +61 455 039 478

Trina Parker
Country President (ANZ)
Trina.Parker@kemin.com
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