

Australian Pork NEWSPAPER

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APRIL chair Dr Tony Peacock thanking Professor Robert van Barneveld for his outstanding contribution to APRIL following his retirement from the Board.

Next for pork research

■ Focused on the future at Stakeholders Day

WHAT does the future hold for Australian pig science?

This was a key question at the Australasian Pork Research Institute Limited 2026 Annual AGM and Stakeholders Day, where 80 representatives across APRIL member organisations took time to discuss research and reflect on the past year of funding opportunities.

The event, held at the Marriott Hotel in South Australia, explored not only the types of research most needed by the pork industry, but also the importance of attracting, developing and retaining high-quality researchers to strengthen current capabilities.

Alongside the research discussions, the event marked an important change to the APRIL Board with Professor Robert van Barneveld officially stepping down after serving as a Board member since APRIL's establishment.

Prof van Barneveld has played an instrumental role in shaping APRIL and contributing to its success.

From authoring the original APRIL prospectus to chairing the Audit and Risk Committee, he has provided invaluable commercialisation expertise, industry experience and leadership.

His contribution has helped shape APRIL into the organisation it is today, and the occasion provided an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate his outstanding service.

While Prof van Barneveld will be

☛ continued P2

Real results on farm

AUSTRALIAN pork producers are making tough decisions every day.

Rising costs, competitive pressures and the need for continued investment are testing farm businesses, while producers continue to deliver safe high-quality pork and maintain high standards of animal care.

Behind every production decision is a business managing risk, employing people and investing in its future.

For producers, industry strategy only matters if it helps improve those businesses and gives them confidence to keep investing.

At Australian Pork Limited, our focus is on practical action across the issues that matter most to producers – biosecurity, productivity, market opportunities and the future competitiveness of Australian pork.

AUSTRALIAN Pork®
Point of View
by DARRYL D'SOUZA
CEO



Protecting farms, pigs and people

Biosecurity remains one of our industry's most important safeguards.

An emergency disease incursion could devastate individual businesses, disrupt domestic production and threaten access to important markets.

Farm-level prevention, preparedness planning and coordination between industry and governments are essential to reducing these risks.

Unauthorised farm invasions create an additional and unacceptable biosecurity concern.

People entering piggeries without permission, breach farm entry protocols, potentially introduce disease-causing pathogens, disturb animals and cause significant stress for pigs and farm staff.

Incidents can also disrupt operations, expose people to workplace hazards and compromise farm security.

APL is helping producers access practical information on biosecurity and farm security, including visitor controls, access procedures, incident reporting and preparedness.

While I acknowledge this may be seen as passive support, we need to communicate clear guidance to producers on documenting incidents, preserving evidence and notifying the appropriate authorities that can help producers respond effectively.

At the very least, APL needs to enhance industry coordination with governments and law enforcement to ensure unlawful entry is taken seriously and applicable laws are enforced.

Groups will argue that the Australian pork industry is using biosecurity to avoid scrutiny of animal welfare.

This is absolutely not the case.

Credible information about pig care, constructive engagement with the community and sound on-farm practices remain important to maintaining public confidence.

Farm security is not only a property issue, it is part of protecting animal health, worker safety and the continuity of Australian pork production.

Creating stronger markets for Australian pork

Imported pork remains a significant competitor in Australia's ham and bacon markets.

While producers cannot control international production costs or exchange rates, there are opportunities to strengthen the position of Australian-grown pork through better supply-chain collaboration and more effective consumer marketing.

Don't get me wrong – price parity with imported pork is the biggest issue and has always been the case.

It worries me that importers in Australia can access pork from the other side of the world and can do so at a price 25-40 percent lower than Australian pork.

I refuse to believe that this price differential is based on only productivity, especially when freight costs alone have increased globally.

APL's marketing

☛ continued P2



HAVE YOUR SAY!

All producers are encouraged to send in emails or letters to be published in APN, outlining any concerns or issues you may have with the industry.

This is an open forum where you can cover any topic, whether for or against an issue.

APN is a wholly independent and self-funded publication owned by publisher Ben Collins.

Please send your emails or letters to:
ben@collins.media or
PO Box 162, Wynnum QLD 4178.

Australian Pork NEWSPAPER

Pork Industry Calendar of Events

2027

JAN 5-7 – Banff Pork Seminar 2027 – Banff, Canada. https://www.banffpork.ca/

JAN 15-16 – International Conference for Swine Viral Diseases (23rd NAPRRS/NC229) – Chicago, USA. https://vetmed.illinois.edu/about-the-college/pathobiology/north-american-prrs-symposium/

FEB 24-25 – RSPCA Animal Welfare Seminar 2027 – Online. https://www.rspca.org.au/learn/animal-welfare-seminar/rspca-animal-welfare-seminar-2027/

MAR 9-11 – National Feral Pig Conference 2027 – Queensland, Australia. https://feralpigs.com.au/national-feral-pig-conference-2027/

JUN 9-10 – World Pork Expo 2027 – Iowa, USA. https://www.worldpork.org

AUG 31 – Annual Swine Conference (37th Edition) – Illinois, USA. https://conference.hogvet.com

NOV TBA – APSA Conference – Melbourne, Australia. https://www.apsa.asn.au

How to supply event details:
Send all details to Australian Pork Newspaper, PO Box 162, Wynnum, Qld 4178, call 0450 672 553 or email design@collins.media

porknews.com.au
0450 672 553



Professor Frank Dunshea explains the 'check-all-that-apply' method and its application in the sensory evaluation of pork.

Next for pork research

☛ from P1
greatly missed, APRIL is pleased to welcome Dr Kate Plush from SunPork Group and Mark McLean, an Australian Pork Limited Board member, to the Board.

Their extensive industry knowledge and experience will be valuable in guiding APRIL's funding decisions and supporting research projects that deliver meaningful outcomes for the industry.

Following the recent restructuring, APRIL also introduced its new 2026-2029 Strategic Plan, which will guide the organisation's research, development and education priorities over the next three years.

A key priority in the plan is to support larger-scale research projects that address significant challenges or opportunities for the industry.

These projects, referred to as 'transformational projects', involve greater collaboration with multiple external partners and are designed to leverage APRIL funding to achieve broader outcomes.

They will also create opportunities for APRIL to support initiatives through programs such as CRC-P and ARC Linkage grants.

The strategic plan also highlights the importance of strengthening industry partnerships, expanding education and training opportunities, retaining existing participants and continuing to grow APRIL's membership and funding base.

In a positive development, we welcome the Craig Mostyn Group as APRIL's newest gold member participant and look forward to CMG's contribution to our education, training and research and development programs.

The industry's chief scientist Dr John Pluske provided an overview of Australia's current research landscape, highlighting the importance of attracting and retaining high-quality researchers.

His presentation raised concerns about the growing limitations in research facilities, resources and specialist expertise across Australian universities and government agencies.

A national survey estimated that pork industry research and development personnel had declined by approximately 20 percent between 2008 and 2025, reinforcing the need to invest in and support both current and emerging researchers.

The recent establishment of the Australian Pork Industry Education and Training Committee is an important step towards addressing these challenges.

The committee will help strengthen the industry's future capability by fostering research and opportunities in education and training.

Alongside broader industry discussions, the stakeholders day was a chance to hear updates on the progress and outcomes of ongoing research projects, as well as newly funded initiatives.

Professor Frank Dunshea from the University of Melbourne presented research into more objective approaches to assessing meat quality for scientific research.

Drawing on findings from projects 5A-108 and 5A-120, Prof Dunshea highlighted the 'check-all-that-apply' method as a faster alternative for assessing consumer perceptions of food product sensory characteristics.

Using this approach, Project 5A-108 identified potential genetic variation associated with intramuscular fat and collagen content.

Additionally, findings from project 5A-120 indicated that dietary lecithin supplementation may improve pork flavour, highlighting further opportunities to enhance pork quality through nutritional interventions.

Pig health was another important focus, with Associate Professor Farhid Hemmatzadeh from the University of Adelaide presenting his team's ongoing research into development of a more effective vaccine for porcine respiratory disease.

The novel vaccine is designed to provide a closer antigenic match to the Australian m hyopneumoniae strains and importantly, does not require porcine serum during its manufacture.

This research has considerable potential for commercial application and APRIL looks forward to following its continued development.

The health theme continued with APRIL's recently appointed Postdoctoral Fellow Dr Ghazanfar Abbas from the University of Melbourne outlining his proposed research into intestinal parasite management in Australian pigs.

The research aims to establish a clearer understanding of the prevalence and impact of intestinal parasites, their long-term effects on pig health

☛ continued P4

Real results on farm

☛ from P1
work helps keep pork relevant to consumers and build demand for the product.

This includes communicating pork's versatility and value, understanding changing consumer preferences and supporting a stronger connection between consumers and Australian production.

Country-of-origin information is also important.

Consumers need clear information to distinguish Australian-grown pork from imported products and make informed purchasing decisions.

Recent media has highlighted the need for clearer country-of-origin labelling both at retail and food service.

While APL will never seek to get involved in business-to-business dealings, we can bring processors, manufacturers and retailers together to discuss where Australian pork can be used more extensively, including what commercial barriers need to be addressed and where new opportunities exist.

These conversations need to focus on practical outcomes for businesses, including opportunities to increase the use of Australian-grown pork in products and market segments where domestic producers can compete.

Getting research into piggeries

Feed efficiency, genetics, reproductive performance, herd health, labour productivity and carcass quality all influence the cost of producing pork and the returns producers receive.

Improving these areas remains one of the most direct ways to strengthen farm productivity.

APL invests in research and development to address production challenges and identify opportunities to improve farm efficiency.

As we know, doing this great research is not the end of it.

We need to quite simply get this research to producers and get these solutions translated into changes in commercial piggeries.

That means working with researchers, veterinarians, advisers and producers to identify practical applications, communicate proven results and encourage adoption of technologies and management practices that improve performance.

Research outcomes need to be relevant to Australian production systems, with clear information about their costs, benefits and limitations.

And that is very much our focus.

Up ahead

Our operating environment continues to change, so priorities need to reflect the issues producers are facing now as well as the risks and opportunities ahead.

Feedback from producers is essential in identifying where support is most needed and where industry efforts can have the greatest impact.

Our aim is to keep APL's work connected to the realities of running a piggery and to focus resources on initiatives with a clear purpose and a practical pathway to benefit our industry.

The future of Australian pork will be shaped not by the challenges we identify, but by the results we deliver for producers.

As we near the end of 2026, I would like to wish you and your family a merry Christmas and all the very best for 2027.

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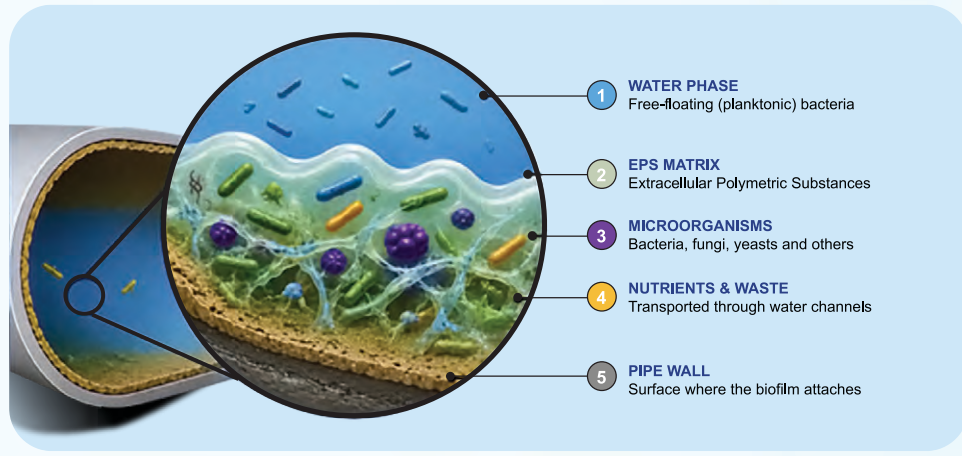
"INSURE" YOUR WATER ISN'T THE SOURCE OF ANY PROBLEMS... WITH INTRA HYDROCARE.

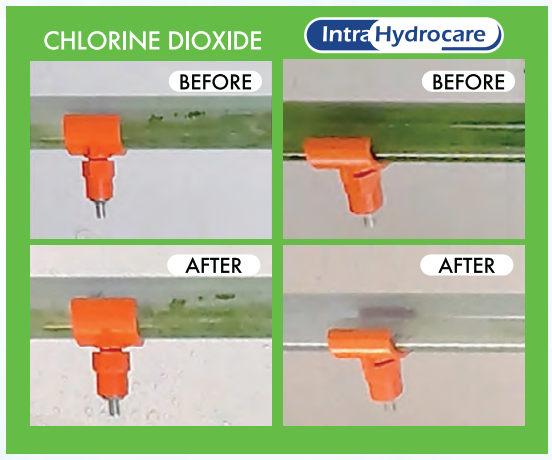
- Ultra stabilised hydrogen peroxide
- Slow release effect that removes biofilm till the end of the pipeline
- Non-corrosive and safe for humans, animals, materials and the environment

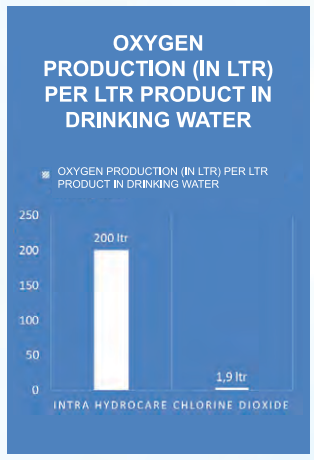
Intra Hydrocare is a unique, non-corrosive and very effective biofilm remover



Contaminated drinking water directly impacts animal health, welfare and performance. Biofilm present in the pipelines is the breeding ground for pathogenic microorganisms and thereby continuously pollutes the drinking water.







Intra Hydrocare© is specifically for use in drinking water and designed to break down and remove biofilm. Due to the high stability of its active components, the product remains effective throughout the entire drinking water system, constantly targeting and treating the biofilm where pathogens hide.

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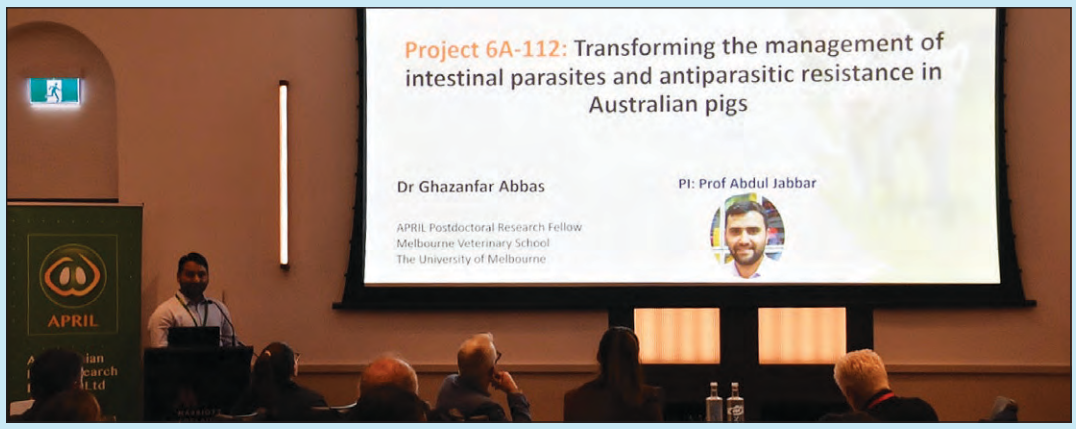
www.ccdanimalhealth.com.au



Dr Ghazanfar Abbas presenting his proposed research on scoping the current state and impact of intestinal parasites management in Australian pigs. Producers are encouraged to participate in this research by scanning the QR code provided.

APRIL: Next for pork research

☛ from P2

and productivity and the emerging challenge of antiparasitic resistance.

Australian pig producers are encouraged to contribute to this important research by completing a national questionnaire.

The survey is open to all producers, regardless of farm size, production system or whether internal parasites have been identified on farm.

Producers who are interested in receiving a free faecal analysis of their pigs can also choose to provide their contact details at the end of the survey.

Click on the QR code below for further information.

APRIL sincerely thanks all presenters and attendees who contributed to the stakeholders day.

It was particularly encouraging to see the strong representation of students and emerging researchers sharing their work during the education and training session.

Presentations showcased a diverse range of research from PhD candidates, with Sarah James from Adelaide University presenting her ongoing research into monitoring reproductive states in sows, Ashiqur Rahman from Murdoch University whose research aims to protect pigs from ceftiofur-resistant e coli, Chandra Chouhan from Murdoch University outlining the development of an oral fluid-based disease diagnostic and Wendy Izedonmwen from the University of Queensland sharing her research into Australian canola and soybean in pig diets.

The education and training session also provided the opportunity to hear from APRIL's emerging research professionals, with Postdoctoral Fellow Dr Bryony Tucker from the South Australian Research and Development Institute reflecting on her fellowship journey, while Dr Katelyn Tomas from JBS Pork Australia shared her experience following her recent participation in the APRIL Industry Placement Program.

The quality and diversity of these presentations shows value of investing in emerging talent and providing opportunities for the next generation of researchers to contribute to the future of Australian pig science.

Finally, congratulations also goes to Dr Tanya Nowland and Dr Lissa Kautto – recipients of the APRIL Enterprise Award – for their innovative concept of a novel detection method for reproductive states in swine.

The technology has been tested and validated through pig trials and collection method is non-invasive, offering a practical and commercially viable solution for the pork industry.

We congratulate Tanya and Lissa on this exciting achievement and look forward to seeing the technology progress towards commercial application.

Again, we thank all those involved with the APRIL stakeholders' day and look forward to the future with the new 2027-2029 strategic plan.

For more information about the day or any APRIL matters, contact APRIL executive officer Dr Charles Rikard-Bell at c.rikardbell@april.org.au

APRIL



Dr Tanya Nowland accepting the APRIL Enterprise Award on behalf of herself and Dr Lissa Kautto for their innovative approach to reproductive state detection in swine.

Scan for the intestinal parasite research survey.

Updated APL pig transporting guide now available

AUSTRALIAN Pork Limited is pleased to announce the release of the third edition of the 'Is it fit for the intended journey?' guide – an updated and practical resource to support the safe and responsible transport of pigs.

Deciding whether a pig is fit for its journey is an important responsibility and plays a key role in protecting animal welfare throughout the transport process.

From assessing the health and condition of individual pigs to understanding journey requirements and transport conditions, there are several important factors to consider.

The updated guide is designed to support producers, transporters and others involved in the movement of pigs to make informed decisions and better understand their responsibilities when transporting pigs.

Building on previous editions, the third edition includes updated information on legislative and other requirements relating to the safe and compliant transport of pigs.

It provides guidance on assessing the suitability of pigs for a journey, as well as the principles of loading, handling and transport to help maintain high animal welfare outcomes.

Good preparation and planning are essential to ensuring pigs are fit for their intended journey.

Factors such as the health and condition of individual pigs, handling practices, loading facilities, weather conditions and journey requirements all need to be considered.

Understanding these factors can help minimise stress, reduce the risk of injury and support better welfare outcomes.

Developed with input from experts across the supply chain, the guide provides a practical reference to support consistent decision-making and good animal welfare practices across the industry.

APL encourages everyone involved in pig transport to familiarise themselves with the updated edition and use it as a reference when preparing and assessing pigs for transport.

The third edition is now available online, scan the QR code below or visit the APL website.

To request a free printed copy, email mandy.bowling@australianpork.com.au

Australian Pork Limited

Scan for the guide.



'Is it fit for the intended journey?' guide – an updated and practical resource to support the safe and responsible transport of pigs.



PigFlow®
Swine Management: Simplified

NEW | AI-POWERED

PigFlow AI: The Point of Care Platform for Pigs, now with Intelligence

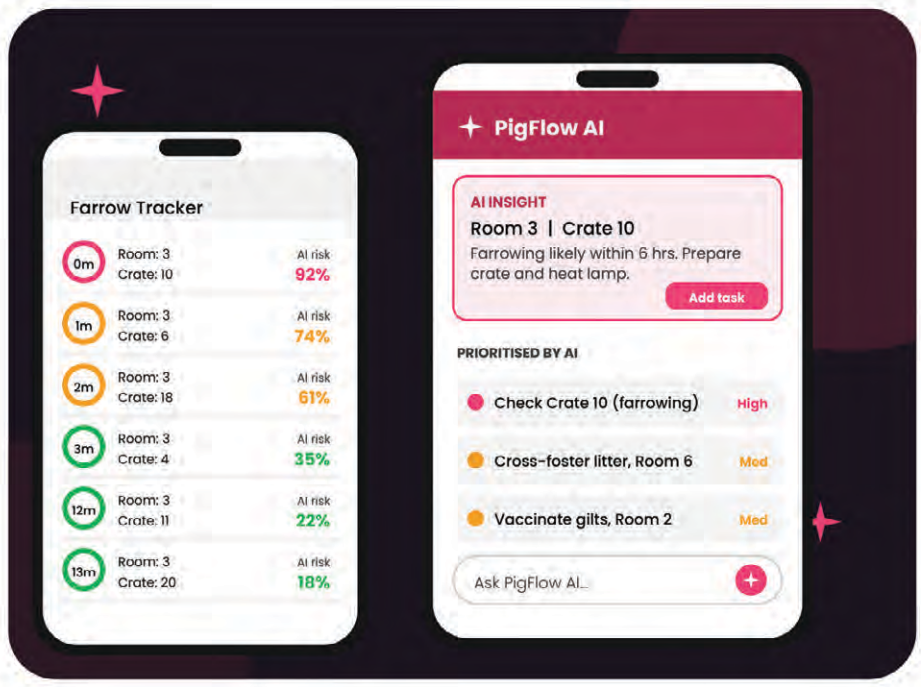
Human centred automation, now driven by artificial intelligence. PigFlow AI watches every sow, litter and task on smart devices, so your team always knows what to do next and gives exceptional care.

What We Do

We guide caregivers with directed workflows that drive process compliance. Now, built-in AI learns from every farrowing, treatment and task to predict problems early, prioritise the day and recommend the next best action, delivering increased engagement, efficiency and overall pig care.

"Which sows are due to farrow tomorrow?"

14 sows due. 3 flagged high-risk. I have prioritised tasks for the night shift.



Our AI Features

Predictive Alerts
Flags farrowing, health and performance issues before they cost you pigs.

Smart Task Prioritisation
Auto-ranks and assigns daily work to the right caregiver at the right time.

Ask Your Data
Ask questions in plain language and get instant answers in any language.

Auto Insights & Reports
AI summarises results against targets with clear recommendations.

How it Works

Step 1

Install Hardware & Software
Network, mobile devices and enterprise management, set up in your barns.

Step 2

Define Operations & Train AI
Managers set goals and SOPs. PigFlow AI learns your herd, barn and team patterns.

Step 3

Direct Execution & Predict
Workflows guide the team while AI prioritises tasks and forecasts what is next.

The benefits of AI automation will directly impact the entire team.

100% Operational Visibility | **12.5%** Efficiency Increase | **4-5%** Increase in PSY

Email:
sue.ellis@apiam.com.au
or shaun.welsh@apiam.com.au

SWINETECH

New AMS resource for pig vets

ANTIMICROBIAL resistance is an ongoing challenge, impacting both human and animal health.

Responsible antimicrobial use is an important part of addressing this challenge, with veterinarians and producers playing a key role in promoting good antimicrobial stewardship practices.

A new online training module, developed specifically for veterinarians working with pigs, aims to support this work by providing practical pig-specific training on antimicrobial use and stewardship.

Funded by Australian Pork Limited and developed by the AMR Vet Collective, the new antimicrobial stewardship module for pig veterinarians builds on the AMR Vet Collective's existing veterinary training on AMS, with additional content tailored to the unique challenges of pig production.

The training takes a practical approach, bringing together expert presentations, diagnostic information and real-world case studies covering diseases commonly encountered in pig production.

It explores how veterinarians can make informed treatment decisions, improve antimicrobial use on farm and strengthen antimicrobial stewardship practices.

Topics include diagnostic processes, optimising antimicrobial dosing and monitoring antimicrobial resistance at the farm level, providing practical insights that veterinarians can apply in their day-to-day work.

The module aligns with Australia's Antimicrobial Prescribing Guidelines for Pigs and provides another resource to support responsible antimicrobial use across the Australian pork industry.

Best of all, the training is free and available online, allowing veterinarians to work through the modules anytime and at their own pace.

Ready to learn more?

Access the Pig AMS online learning program by scanning the QR code below.

Australian Pork Limited



Introducing Pork Frontiers

Pork Frontiers

by DR CHRIS RICHARDS

WELCOME to the first instalment of *Pork Frontiers*, a new monthly column in this publication.

Each month, I'll share some of the latest research, information and interesting observations I've picked up while travelling through the international pig industry, from conference halls and university research farms to commercial units on the other side of the world.

The aim is simple – to bring back ideas that could be useful on Australian farms, and to give you a feel for where the global industry is heading, minus the jargon.

Some columns will dig into a single piece of research while others will highlight areas that require further investigation or deeper discussion.

Pigs, pixels and decisions – how AI is moving onto the farm

A camera that scores your sows' body condition from a single phone photo.

Software that flags a risky farrowing before it turns into a stillbirth.

Not long ago this was predominantly being performed in a research lab.

Today it is being tested on commercial pig farms and the results are promising.

The Allen D Leman Swine Conference, hosted by the University of Minnesota in September 2026, is widely regarded as one of the world's leading swine health and production meetings.

This year's program included a session on precision livestock, artificial intelligence and decision support.

Five pieces of work presented are highlighted here, all with a common aim of using data and machine vision to make routine farm decisions more objective, more timely and easier to scale.

One photo, one sow condition score

Ayva Bohr of Iowa State University, a Morrison Swine Innovator Prize presenter, described a handheld AI model that classifies gestating sows as thin, ideal or fat from a single iPhone image.

The model was trained on pictures from two commercial sow farms, matched against calliper scores.

It labelled 85 percent of animals correctly, and every miss was between neighbouring categories – such as thin versus ideal rather than across the extremes.

The technology was represented as faster and less labour-intensive than conventional scoring and has the potential to reduce operator-to-operator subjectivity in body-condition assessment.

The catch is that different models may be needed for different genetic lines and for gilts, so further validation will matter before anything is rolled out widely.

Next steps include a larger image set, a smartphone app and a possible link to automated feeding systems.

Measuring backfat as sows walk past

A second project, presented by Daniel Morris of Michigan State University, called 'PigFormer', took the idea further.

A depth and colour camera captures each sow as she walks beneath it and a neural network estimates backfat and loin depth.

Compared with ultrasound, backfat was estimated to within about 2.4mm and loin depth to within about 5mm.

The model also found the hip region more informative than the traditional last-rib site.

The hardware is relatively cheap and designed for gestation housing.

The longer-term idea is to feed continuous measurements to electronic sow feeders, so feed can be adjusted sow by sow rather than on an occasional subjective score.

Spotting trouble before it happens at farrowing

Diego Leal from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln presented his research findings where he video-recorded 52 parity one to four crossbred sows through unassisted

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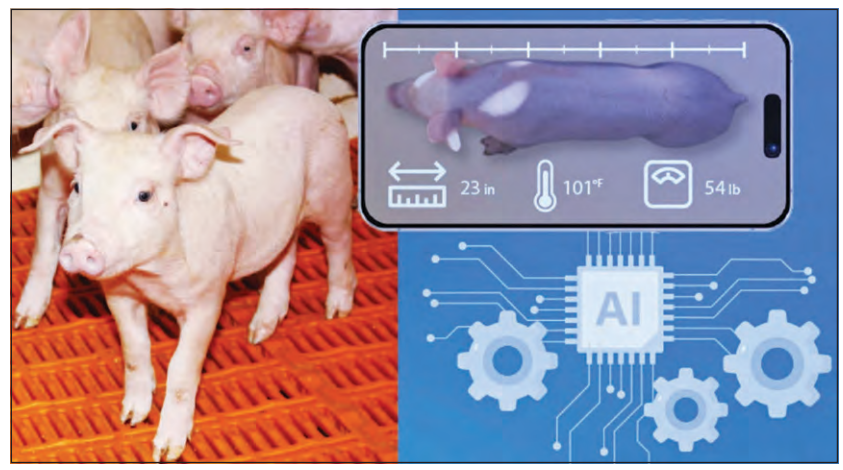

Exploring AI and it's place on farm. Photo: National Pork Board and the Pork Checkoff



Introducing Pork Frontiers by Chris Richards

☛ from P6

farrowing to find early warning signs of prolonged farrowing and stillbirth.

Every extra 10 minutes between the first and second piglet was linked to 5.6 percent longer total farrowing time and 34 percent higher odds of a prolonged farrowing, defined as more than 300 minutes.

Stillbirth risk climbed with both the length of the birth interval and the time already spent farrowing.

A 60-minute gap after one hour carried an estimated 11 percent chance of a stillbirth, compared with 32 percent after five hours.

Each additional posture change during an interval lifted the odds of a prolonged interval by 45 percent, and sows that spent more time in ventral recumbency had a longer farrowing duration.

The team is now building deep-learning models to automate this and support caretakers in their decision making.

Teaching a camera to watch for wildlife

Gabriela Catani from the University of Minnesota tackled a biosecurity headache by training a 'you-only-live-once' based deep-learning model to review more than 400,000 videos of wildlife around compost piles and rendering boxes, with the aim to create an automated surveillance tool for identifying biosecurity relevant animal activity.

Her model reached better than 95 percent accuracy in early testing, picking out animals such as rats and coyotes while ignoring pig carcasses.

Species identification will come in a second stage, but the tool already shows how passive camera footage can become practical biosecurity intelligence.

Is your medicator delivering?

A lower-tech entry but one with a sharp message.

Molly Jones of North Carolina State University found only 25 percent of water medicators delivered a dose within 10 percent of target, with errors ranging from 40 percent below to 35 percent above.

Poor mixing in water lines, especially at low flow, was a key factor.

With the aid of a commonly used vaccine water additive (Reload Pack DT), which contains a blue dye, the PigmentRx tool lets staff compare a drinker sample's colour against a digital scale on a mobile device for an instant read on concentration.

The scale is freely available online (pigmentrx.com).

While Reload Pack DT is not currently available to the Australian market, calibrating titrated food dye against a colour chart would be a valuable tool for local producers to ensure medication and vaccines are being delivered to pigs at the expected rate.

What does this research mean for Australian producers?

A few themes ran through the session.

The first is that the technology only matters if it changes a decision.

The most convincing work linked a measurement directly to an action such as a body condition score tied to the feeder, a farrowing alert tied to a caretaker's next move, a dye colour chart linked to an adjusted water medication system.

The second is that much of it is built on affordable tools.

A smartphone, an inexpensive camera and a free online colour chart are well within reach of a commercial unit.

You don't need a research budget to start asking better questions of your own system.

A note of caution is in order too.

Most of these tools are still at the research stage.

Presenters were upfront that models, particularly those assessing body condition score, may need retraining for different genetics and gilts, and that larger datasets and field validation come next.

Treat them as a glimpse of what is coming rather than products to buy tomorrow.

In the meantime, the medicator finding is one you can act on now.

If only one in four units delivers close to its target dose, checking yours is a cheap place to start.

The Leman program covered much more – from biosecurity and disease surveillance to managing large litters and colostrum – and I'll return to some of it in future articles.

Ask APL brings 30 years of research to pork industry

FOR years producers have asked for an easier way to find and use Australian pork research.

Now, 'Ask APL' is putting more than 30 years of Australian Pork Limited and Australasian Pork Research Institute Limited research within reach.

Officially launched at the October 2026 delegates forum, Ask APL is APL's new artificial intelligence-enabled tool designed specifically for the Australian pork industry.

The tool brings together more than 30 years of Australian pork research and makes it easier than ever for producers to access trusted information when they need it.

Ask APL allows users to search across decades of research and quickly find relevant insights, helping turn valuable industry knowledge into practical information that can support everyday decision-making on farm.

Instead of searching through multiple reports, producers can ask a question and receive information drawn from APL's extensive research library.

Simply ask a question in everyday language, explore the answer and follow links to the original research.

Whether you're looking into piglet survival, weaning management or another production topic, Ask APL offers a new starting point for finding the information you need.

The launch followed a successful proof of concept initiated in May 2026.

Early feedback from delegates and industry representatives was positive, highlighting interest in a practical way to access the industry's research.

Your feedback will help shape what comes next.

APL will continue gathering input from producers and industry stakeholders to improve the experience, refine functionality and keep Ask APL responsive to your needs.

Got a question?

Visit apl.getcaitlyn.ai and share your feedback with extension@australianpork.com.au

Ask APL is also available through the APL website.

Australian Pork Limited



Ask APL offers a new starting point for finding the information pork producers need.





Pigs want and need socialising.



Well mothered and well socialised piglets look to their dam for direction in the wild and on farm.



Pigs well socialised from birth may deliver a better product at end of life and be more easily managed along the production journey.

Well socialised pigs will bring home bacon

Cant Comment

by **BRENDON CANT**



A RECENT *RSPCA Update* caught my attention because it focused on an area I believe is too often neglected or even dismissed as too difficult or too expensive to implement.

Just how important social interacting is for pigs in piggeries, especially those confined to intensive housing systems, simply can't be underestimated.

Pigs are very social and sentient animals, experience a wide range of emotions, form close bonds and possess complex cognitive abilities.

In the wild, pigs live in close-knit family groups, preferring to sleep nose-to-nose and they can recognise individual pigs they have come across before.

One of the most highly intelligent of domesticated animals, they experience joy, sadness, excitement and likely even anxiety or stress – the latter being the major factor to be considered when designing appropriate housing and processing systems.

So, the *RSPCA Update* had this to say…

☛ continued P9

Gallagher (formerly Tresidder Insurance Brokers)



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Well socialised pigs will bring home bacon

☚ from P8

Social dynamics and individual differences influence positive animal welfare in farmed animals

Beyond simply preventing suffering, positive animal welfare means ensuring animals have opportunities to experience positive emotions, build resilience and develop competence in species-specific skills.

For many social farm animals, this includes opportunities for positive interactions and developing social skills and the ability to maintain social bonds and avoid negative interactions.

Previous research has focused on reducing conflict, with current farming systems designed accordingly.

Little consideration has been given to promoting positive interactions or understanding the influence of social dynamics and individual differences on animal welfare.

If PAW-friendly systems are to become standard practice, evidence-based guidance for promoting positive social environments is needed.

This review focused on individual differences and social dynamics as key elements of farm animal welfare.

Drawing on evidence across farm animal species, including cattle, horses, pigs and sheep, alongside relevant findings from other animals and humans, the review explores how individual differences may influence how animals perceive and experience social environments and likewise, how social environments may influence individual welfare.

The review highlights how regular positive social interactions, such as grooming, play, social buffering, group stability and displays of prosocial comforting behaviour contribute to positive welfare by reducing stress and increasing an animal's sense of security.

Positive social experiences early in life also appear to strengthen social skills, confidence and reduce conflict later in life.

Individual differences in sociability, sensitivity and cognitive ability between animals further shape how animals experience and contribute to social dynamics.

For instance, some highly sociable individuals appear to act as 'social glue', helping to maintain group cohesion.

PAW-friendly farming systems may therefore benefit from encouraging positive experiences during early life, keeping sociable individuals within established groups, prioritising group-stability and considering individual differences in sensitivity and social preferences when making management decisions.

Play behaviour and ears forward may even indicate positive emotional state in pigs.

Studies indicate pigs demonstrate capacity for empathy, experience emotional contagion (where strong emotions in one animal influence others), engage in reconciliatory behaviours after fights and comfort other pigs experiencing negative emotional states.

Despite this, pigs are mostly housed in intensive farming systems that are likely to pose a risk to their welfare.

Currently, welfare indicators in pigs capture negative emotions and indicators of positive emotions are lacking.

Clearly, we need to lift our game and chase positive emotions to breed and maintain pigs that will live better more balanced lives and importantly are more likely to produce better quality meat.

Stressed animals just don't cut it!



A happy pig means smiles all-round.



Balinese pig statues, such as this one in Ubud, carry deep spiritual, cultural and agricultural meanings rooted in Balinese-Hindu tradition. Pigs and wild boars are traditional symbols of agricultural wealth, prosperity and food security in Balinese culture.



ASF remains a significant global feral pig challenge



Feral pigs drinking at a muddy billabong. Photo: Western Local Land Services

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



AFRICAN swine fever dominated discussion at the fourteenth International Symposium on Wild Boar and Other Suids held in Zagreb, Croatia in September 2026.

The ongoing threat that this disease poses to agriculture, wildlife and biodiversity around the world was highlighted by speakers at the conference.

ASF and disease management represented the largest single research theme addressed by delegates from across Europe, Asia and North America.

Researchers and wildlife managers shared lessons from countries currently battling ASF outbreaks and presented new tools and technologies aimed at improving preparedness, surveillance and response.

A consistent message throughout the conference was that ASF is no longer viewed as a short-term emergency.

Instead, many countries are shifting towards long-term management approaches that recognise the complex interactions between wild pigs, domestic pigs, landscapes and people.

One of the most significant case studies came from Spain, where ASF re-emerged in wild boar populations near Barcelona in late 2025 after more than 30 years of disease freedom.

Researchers reported that retrospective analysis suggested the virus had been circulating for several months before it was detected, highlighting the importance of robust surveillance systems capable of identifying outbreaks early.

Enhanced carcass surveillance, trained detection dogs, movement barriers and targeted wild boar control have all formed part of the response effort.

Several presentations focused on improving surveillance and early detection.

Researchers from Spain demonstrated promising non-invasive surveillance techniques, including environmental sampling and collection of oral fluids from wild boar at aggregation sites, which may complement traditional carcass-based surveillance systems.

Other researchers presented an artificial intelligence-based early warning system that analyses wild boar movement patterns captured on cameras to identify subtle behavioural changes that may indicate disease before clinical signs become obvious.

Advances in disease control were also featured.

Encouraging results from trials of an oral ASF vaccine developed for wild boar populations were presented.

The vaccine provided high levels of protection and included technology that allows vaccinated animals to be distinguished from infected animals, an important step towards practical field application.

Another recurring theme was the importance of understanding how landscapes influence disease spread.

Scientists presented modelling tools designed to identify critical movement corridors, infrastructure crossings and high-risk locations that could be targeted during an outbreak.

These approaches aim to help managers make faster and more strategic decisions when containing disease incursions.

The strongest message from the conference was that successful ASF management relies on collaboration.

Presentations from Sweden, Germany and other affected countries demonstrated the value of coordinated responses involving governments, hunters, veterinarians, researchers and land managers.

While hunters are the main on-ground wild boar management tool in most parts of Europe to target removal of remnant animals, surveillance and outbreak response activities, hunting alone has struggled to achieve large population reductions in many areas that are required for disease control.

Sweden's successful eradication of ASF following its 2023 outbreak was attributed to rapid intervention, extensive hunter engagement, strong biosecurity measures and close cooperation between stakeholders.

The Finnish Food Authority announced on November 12, 2026 that a temporary 83km electric fence will be built around the core of its African swine fever zone in the southeast of Finland, near its border with Russia.

Construction will commence in December 2026.

Download the conference proceedings via the QR code below.

For Australia, these findings reinforce the importance of preparedness and coordinated feral pig management.

While ASF is not present in Australia, the disease remains one of the greatest biosecurity threats facing our pork industry.

The lessons emerging from overseas demonstrate that early detection, effective surveillance, coordinated action and strong partnerships will be essential should Australia ever face an ASF incursion.

The National Feral Pig Action Plan continues to work with governments, industry, researchers and land managers to improve the effectiveness of management programs, strengthen monitoring and support coordinated community-led programs across Australia.

These efforts are aiming to help reduce the impacts of feral pigs today as well as contribute to Australia's ability to respond rapidly and effectively to future biosecurity threats.

As 2026 comes to a close, I'd like to thank you all for your support this year.

I wish you and your families a safe, happy and restful festive season and look forward to continuing to work with you in 2027.

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.

Scan for the conference proceedings.

Protein index highlights our fertiliser and fuel exposure

A SUMMARY of the world's protein sovereignty has been released and shows only one country or bloc, Canada, as sovereign.

Behind Argentina and the US – and ahead of Russia, Brazil, New Zealand, Uruguay, the European Union, Norway and Ukraine in the resilient grouping – Australia sits at number four in the rankings.

Canada has a score of 82.8 and Australia 75.7, while the lowest scores belong to the critically exposed blocs of East Africa and Horn excluding Ethiopia on 39.2, the Gulf Cooperation council on 36.5 and the non-GCC Middle East bloc on 30.5

The index says Australia's reliance on imported fertiliser, fuel and crop-protection chemicals challenges the sovereignty of its cropping and therefore livestock-production systems.

The Protein Sovereignty Index measures how well each country's protein supply holds up under pressure, and traces that supply from the fertiliser and feed behind it to the prices people pay, as well as estimating how long stocks would last if trade stopped.

It has been published by Singapore-based company Full Circle Biotechnology, which primarily manufactures aquaculture feed in Thailand made from insect protein and agricultural byproducts.

The index's methodology and a selection of assessments were reviewed prior to publication by an expert panel of 10.

The panel included former USDA chief economist Joseph Glauber, StoneX vice president of fertiliser Josh Linville, investor and former negotiator at the Office of the US Trade Representative Mikhail Zeldovich and Aberdeen Investments chief executive officer Asia Pacific Ian Macdonald.

"Even the US, one of the few countries that can feed itself on protein, depends on a handful of beef processors and a single phosphorus producer," Mr Zeldovich said.

"Most other countries are more exposed still, relying on feed and fertiliser from abroad.

"Supply chain security has focused on chips and minerals – food and feed deserve the same attention."

Mr Macdonald said some of the world's wealthiest markets are among the most exposed.

"Japan, South Korea and Taiwan raise much of their own meat and eggs on feed that arrives by sea," Mr Macdonald said.

"Thailand exports chicken and seafood,

☛ continued P12



Spreading urea in July in the Oaklands district of southern NSW. Australia imports all of its urea. Photo: Narrain Grain

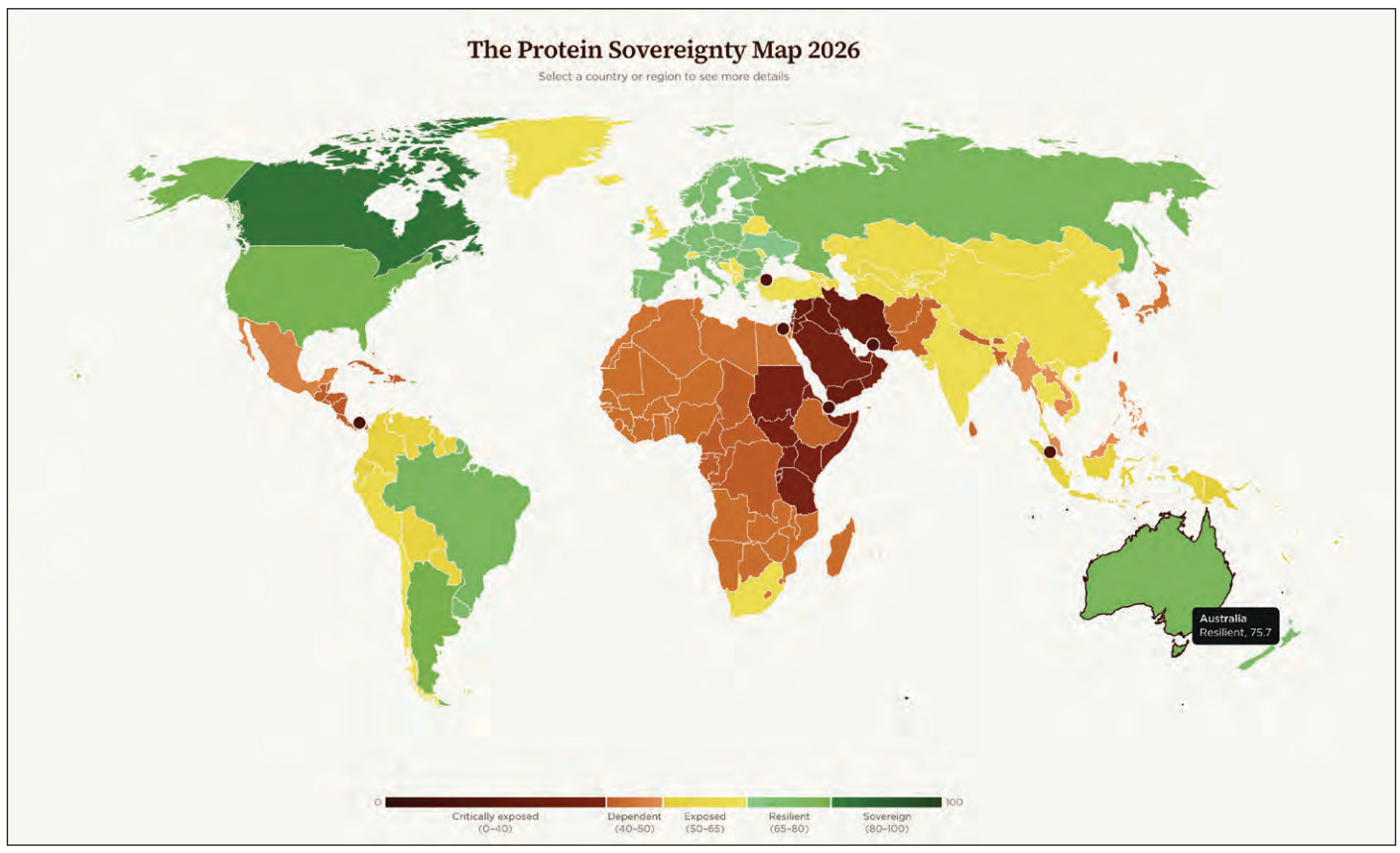

Figure 1: The 2026 Protein Sovereignty Index. Source: Full Circle Biotechnology

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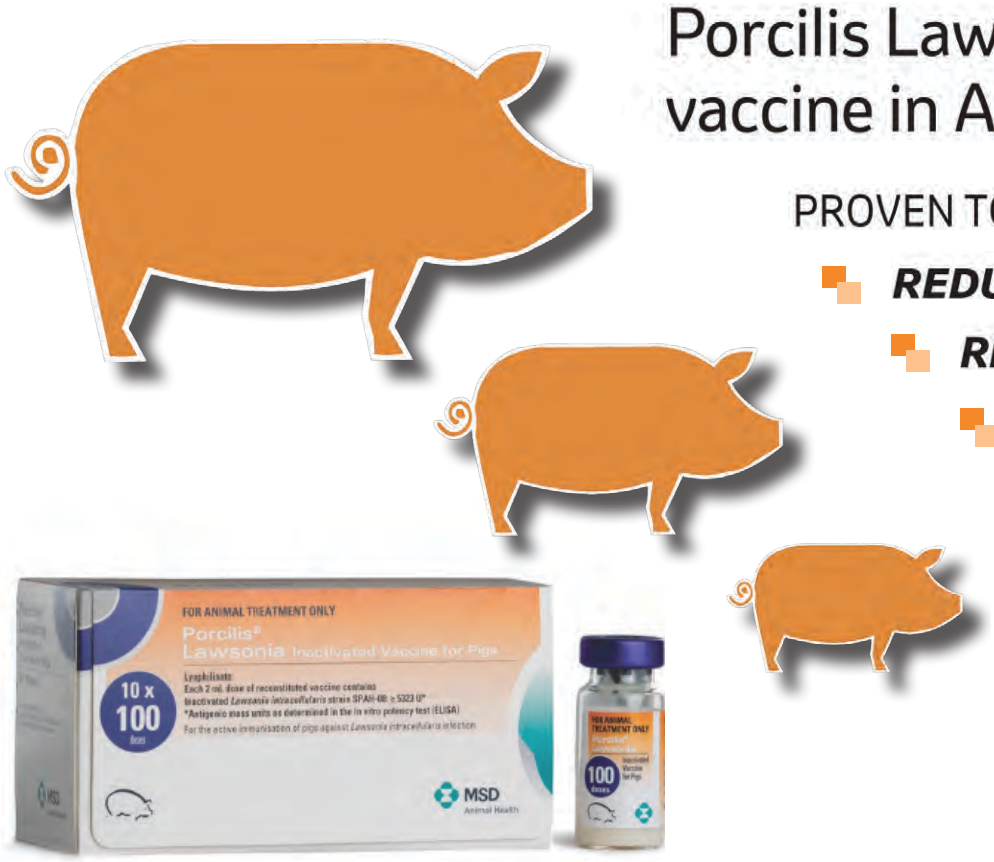

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Keeping effluent flowing at Australian piggeries

AUSSIE Pumps has achieved another major milestone with the successftul installation of a 4" B4XR-A/X 15kW 316 stainless-steel self-priming effluent pump at Riverside Piggery in Queensland.

Replacing a traditional cast-iron pump, the new Aussie GMP unit delivers a corrosion-resistant solution for one of the toughest pumping applications in the livestock industry.

Cast iron fails, effluent does not wait

Effluent from commercial piggeries can be highly corrosive.

Traditional cast-iron pumps are vulnerable to deterioration in these demanding conditions, resulting in premature failures, costly repairs and unwanted downtime.

When a pump stops, the problems quickly escalate.

Effluent can accumulate in sheds and collection pits, creating unpleasant odours and unsanitary conditions.

For commercial piggeries, effective effluent management is essential for maintaining farm hygiene, animal welfare and biosecurity.

Now available, 316 stainless steel

Since introducing the Aussie GMP range of 316 stainless-steel self-priming pumps, Aussie Pumps has attained outstanding success across Australia's livestock industry, particularly in piggeries.

The secret is combining excellent corrosion resistance with powerful pumping performance.

The B4XR-A/X 15kW pump is designed to handle demanding effluent applications, delivering a maximum flow of 2200LPM and a maximum head of 30m.

This combination of high-capacity pumping and 316 stainless-steel construction makes it an ideal solution for challenging piggery effluent applications.

And these performance capabilities make the B4XR-A/X a powerful solution for moving large volumes of effluent in demanding farm environments.

Its self-priming design also provides practical advantages for applications where reliable suction and efficient operation are essential.

With 316 stainless-steel wetted components, Aussie GMP pumps offer piggery operators a compelling alternative to traditional cast-iron units that struggle with corrosive issues.

"Pumping effluent like nothing."

Riverside Piggery owner Tina Sullivan is delighted with the new installation.

The B4XR-A/X is handling the effluent effortlessly, demonstrating the benefits of choosing the right pump for a demanding application.

For piggery operators, the objective is simple – keep effluent moving, minimise interruptions and reduce the ongoing costs associated with premature pump failure.

Stop replacing, invest in stainless steel

Why continue replacing pumps that struggle with corrosive effluent when a purpose-built alternative is available?

Aussie Pumps is helping Australian farmers tackle challenging effluent applications with robust stainless-steel pumping technology engineered for demanding real-world conditions.

Ready to make the switch to stainless steel?

Call Aussie Pumps on (02) 8865 3500 to discuss the right 316 stainless-steel pump for your piggery.

Aussie Pumps



The differences in performance, durability and corrosion resistance between cast-iron and stainless-steel pumps.



Protein index highlights our fertiliser and fuel exposure

from P11

and Vietnam exports seafood, but both rely on imported feed to do it."

Following is a summary of sections of the report pertaining to Australia, Canada and the Middle East from the full report, which is available online.

Scan the QR code below.

Fuel, fertiliser erode Australian sovereignty

Over the three years to 2024-25, farms exported 71 percent of their production by volume and produced more than three times the beef and sheepmeat available for domestic use, while poultry production slightly exceeded local demand.

Seafood and pork are the main exceptions – imports meet 73 percent and 38 percent of domestic supply respectively.

The high reliance on seafood imports comes despite Tasmanian farmed fish production, which in 2020-21 saw more than 83,000 tonne of salmon and trout harvested.

The US supplied 41 percent of Australia's fresh and chilled boneless pork imports in 2023, and 51 percent in 2024, when Australia produced about 2.6Mt of beef and veal and exported 1.3Mt, making it the second-largest beef exporter after Brazil.

Sheepmeat exports reached a record 614,389 tonne the same year, and Australia remains the world's largest sheepmeat exporter.

Milk output was 8.47Mt in 2023, with 22 percent exported.

Chicken is the most eaten meat, at about 50kg a head, and Australia produces about 1.5Mt of poultry a year.

More cattle are now fed grain rather than being grassfed, pig and poultry farms use imported soymeal, and salmon farms rely on feed made from wild fish.

The more serious dependence is behind the farm gate.

In 2023, net imports covered 83 percent of nitrogen fertiliser use, 47 percent of phosphate and all potash use.

If the Phosphate Hill mine in northwest Queensland closed, phosphate imports would rise from 47 percent of use towards 100 percent.

Australia makes no urea and closed its only manufacturing plant in January 2023 because it could not secure affordable gas.

In 2023 Australia imported 3.2Mt of urea and 3.85Mt in 2024, with 68 percent supplied by Gulf states, and plants inside the Strait of Hormuz accounting for around 55 percent.

During this year's Strait of Hormuz closure, farm urea prices rose from about A$835/tonne to $1435/tonne by May 7, then fell after the June ceasefire.

On fuel, Australia refines only about one fifth of what it consumes and fuel stocks have been thin throughout the Strait of Hormuz closure period.

Diesel cover averaged 32 days in the March quarter of 2026 and stood at 39 days on July 28, with petrol at 43 days and jet fuel at 34.

Australia has not met the International Energy Agency's 90-day stockholding rule since 2012, though it committed to comply by 2026.

Required diesel stocks are 20 days for refiners and 32 for importers, with a temporary 20 percent cut extended to September 30, 2026.

The 2026 shock lasted about four months, from late February to a June ceasefire that reopened the strait.

Fuel supply held up – stocks stayed above pre-conflict levels and only 65 of 8118 fuel stations were out of diesel on July 31, even though diesel traded 80 percent above its pre-conflict price in late July.

Required diesel stocks were lowered during 2026, not raised.

Farm output remains substantial – a prolonged input shortage would make the next harvest more costly and less certain.

Most households can afford food and only 3.2 percent of Australians could not afford a healthy diet in 2024.

That national figure sits alongside much greater hardship in remote communities – in 2022-23, 41 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households reported food insecurity for lack of money, rising to 50.7 percent in remote areas.

The climate is making that land less reliable – changes in the seasons between 2001 and 2023 cut average broadacre farm profits by an estimated 18 percent.

The main risks to Australian resilience in protein production are climate and dependence on imported inputs, and 2026 showed both recur.

Farm output remains high, but 2026 showed how imported inputs and thin reserves can hold it back when shipping routes close.

The 18 percent fall in broadacre farm profits is a trend, and each drought now starts from a warmer baseline.

The next steps for Australia are completion of Project Ceres, to build stocks of diesel, AdBlue and crop chemicals sized to what Australia imports and make more crop chemicals onshore.

Canada's potash adds strength

Canada's large food-producing base and world-leading potash industry make it the only country in the index-rated sovereign.

That strength extends across crops, meat and farm inputs.

Its weak points are specific rather than a lack of food.

Canada imported all its phosphate fertiliser nutrient in 2024, and the US supplied 55 percent of consumer-oriented food imports.

About half of field-crop exports pass through Vancouver, where a four-day strike stopped shipments in 2024.

Those links can raise costs and interrupt trade even as farms continue to produce a surplus.

Canada is one of the world's biggest wheat exporters and is its biggest canola producer and exporter.

Canada is self-sufficient or a substantial net exporter in every major protein class, from cereals and oilseed meals to pulses, pork, beef, seafood, dairy, poultry and eggs.

Agricultural credit is a strength – it accounted for 8.7 percent of bank lending in 2024, about five times farming's share of the economy.

Climate remains a production risk, the 2021 Prairie drought cut wheat output 36.7 percent and canola 26.9 percent from 2020.

continued P13

Protein index highlights our fertiliser and fuel exposure

☛ from P12

Beef deficit, US relations pose risk to Canada

Canada's main animal-protein import exposure is beef, about 14 percent of domestic supply in 2023.

Food imports are more concentrated – the US supplied 55 percent of consumer-oriented agri-food imports in 2024.

The supplier relationship now carries trade-policy risk.

US proclamations in July 2026 set 50 percent tariffs on a broad range of Canadian goods, including many dairy products, effective August 19, 2026.

Tariffs apply to Canadian exports but the dispute raises the risk of retaliation and border friction on Canada's largest food-import route.

Canada makes slightly more nitrogen than its farms use and grows domestic feed crops.

It is the world's largest potash producer, mining 15Mt of K2O in 2025 of a world total of 49Mt, and its potash reserves are 1.1 billion tonnes, second to Russia's 2Bt.

Canada also produced 3.57Mt of nitrogen nutrient in 2024 against agricultural use of 3.21Mt.

While it exports energy and grows its own feed, Canada produced no phosphate nutrient in 2024, imported 1.12Mt and applied 1.16Mt.

Its monoammonium phosphate imports alone were 1.78Mt of product, 70.8 percent from the US and 27.9 percent from Morocco.

Nitrogen is less secure than the national output figure suggests – Canada imported 1.2Mt of nitrogen nutrient in 2024 against 640,000t exported, a western industry exporting south and an eastern market drawing on imports.

The 2026 Strait of Hormuz disruption showed a third exposure – price contagion.

With about 35 percent of global urea exports normally transiting the strait, prices climbed above A$1262.18/tonne in April 2026, up 80 percent since February and the highest since April 2022.

Middle East most vulnerable

The Gulf Cooperation Council nations of Saudia Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have a combined PSI score of 36.5, ahead of only the non-GCC Middle East countries on 30.5.

These comprise Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, and reflect the impact of water stress, conflict and unaffordable food.

Food security varies sharply across this region – Iran harvested 19.5Mt of cereals in 2025, Iraq and Jordan hold substantial grain reserves and Israel produces nearly all the poultry it consumes.

These strengths do little for people living amid war or economic collapse elsewhere in the region.

Yemen imports roughly 85 percent of its food, and in Syria, the share unable to afford a healthy diet rose from 41 percent in 2019 to 73.5 percent in 2024.

Even the stronger producers depend on outside supply.

Iran is forecast to import 11Mt of corn in 2026-27, much of it for livestock, while its feed stocks cover only 14-21 days, agriculture also uses about 92 percent of Iran's water withdrawals.

The region can buy or grow large amounts of food but access depends heavily on where people live, what they can earn and whether trade routes remain open.

In the GCC nations, import exposure is a defining weakness, as tested by this year's closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The GCC nations overall import about 85-90 percent of their food and more than 70 percent of those normally pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

The Middle East Institute puts 81 percent of rice through the strait.

Grain is split across two exposed routes – about 39 percent of wheat and other grains from western suppliers comes through Bab el-Mandeb, and 35 percent through Hormuz.

The suppliers are few as well – across the five members that report rice imports, India supplied 76.1 percent in 2024 and Pakistan 13.7 percent by weight.

Tanker traffic through Hormuz was down by more than 90 percent when the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation chief economist assessed the crisis on March 26, 2026, and the closure was still disrupting Gulf shipping in July.

Grain shipments were disrupted at once and Saudi Arabia moved its purchases to King Abdullah Port and Jeddah on the Red Sea.

The Gulf has found partial ways around the strait.

Saudi Arabia's Red Sea ports, Oman's Salalah and Duqm and the UAE's east coast have all worked in a real crisis.

Weekly container traffic at Khor Fakkan rose from about 8000 to 65,000 TEUs after ships were diverted.

Gulftainer is spending A$2.97B to raise yearly capacity from 3.5M to 10M TEUs, and Fujairah has silos for 300,000 tonnes of grain.

None of this helps Qatar, Kuwait or Bahrain, which have no coast outside the Gulf.

Feed matters most for a protein system built on poultry, dairy and fish farms, and the Gulf imports nearly all of it.

Breeding stock is imported too – Baladna's dairy herd in Qatar began with about 4000 Holstein cows flown in from the US and Europe following a blockade imposed by some of its neighbours in 2017.

Another 3200 cows arrived by sea in 2018, with 3000 more planned for that November – the same model runs across the Gulf.

For other inputs, the Gulf sells to the world rather than buying.

Qatar's QAFCO can make 5.6Mt of urea and 3.Mt of ammonia a year and calls itself the world's largest single-site urea exporter, with 14 percent of world supply.

The Gulf petrochemicals association gives a more cautious figure, about 7 percent of world nitrogen and phosphate output, with Saudi Arabia fifth in nitrogen and sixth in phosphate.

Saudi Arabia's Ma'aden's Phosphate 3 complex will add 3Mt, taking phosphate fertiliser capacity to about 9Mt a year, with the second phase due in 2027.

The energy for fertiliser, desalination and cold stores is produced at home.

Gulf-owned trading companies add a further buffer.

Saudi Arabia's SALIC owns 81.8 percent of Olam Agri, which gives the Gulf its own global business for buying, processing and trading grain.

Al Dahra does the same for animal fodder, Abu Dhabi's ADQ has held a large stake since 2021.

These companies give Gulf buyers more control over where food comes from and how it travels than buying on the open market.

Gulf sovereign wealth funds hold about A$5.94-7.42 trillion, so governments can outbid almost anyone when food is short, food reserves are deep too.

The Gulf will keep importing most of its food because it lacks the land and water to grow it.

Turning imported feed into meat, eggs and milk with desalinated water keeps its food production dependent on foreign supply.

Its real protection is money, reserves and the ability to reroute cargo quickly, all at high cost.

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