

Inspirational ideas

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A network to improve health management in pigs

DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING NETWORK TO ENHANCE AWARENESS AND WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN PIG PRODUCTION TO REDUCE THE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotics

Antibiotics have played an important role in fighting against infectious diseases in human and animal populations for decades. However, bacteria naturally develop resistance to antibiotics and there is evidence that global levels of resistance are increasing. "Antibiotics will become less and less effective and their use has to be reduced to a minimum over the next few years" says Dr. Hendrik Nienhoff (Swine Health Service, Lower Saxony) from German Operational Group PIG HEALTH Lern-Netzwerk.

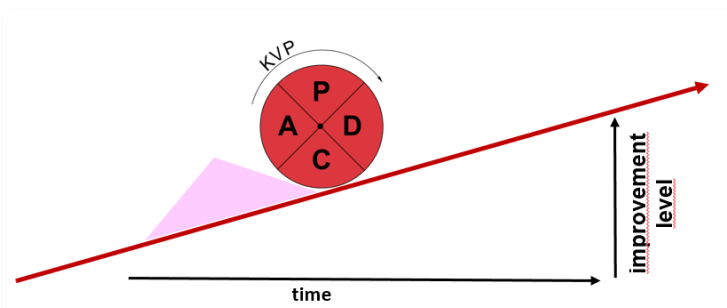


"As the use of antibiotics depends on many different factors, in order to reduce their use, pig-farmers need an approach that takes into account the farm-specific challenges as well as the variety of factors influencing animal health" says Dr. Hubert Gerhardy (Marketing Service Gerhardy – one of the OG partners) who is experienced in measures to increase competitiveness and animal health.

In order to respond to these issues, nine pig farmers and specialist advisers from the farmers organisation VzF as well as veterinarians (swine health service, local veterinarians) and scientists have founded this Operational Group. The project runs 'Learning Factories' and will set up a 'Learning network' to improve health management on pig farms.

Learning Factory

Work processes (such as customer-oriented order processing) need to be continuously improved. The concept of 'Learning Factories' is a technique used in the mechanical engineering sector. It is applied to improve work processes in a collective, continuous manner. One specific approach within this, which can help to increase productivity and to reduce waste is the tool "Kaizen": this tool involves several cycles of planning, doing, checking and action (see graph).



Working in cooperation with mechanical engineers, the Operational Group is proving the transferability of the tool on pig farms to enhance pig health and reduce the use of antibiotics.

Learning Network

Within this part of the project, biannual workshops bringing together all project participants are organised to support the exchange of experiences and methods improving farm hygiene and management. Measures are defined (at the workshops), executed (on the farms) and tracked. Regular meetings of workgroups (farmer, advisor, vet) guided by the swine health service are also conducted on farm. Finally, the effect of the measures is analysed.

In addition, at the beginning and at the end of the project, attitudes and behaviour of farmers and veterinarians were investigated to analyse if the project had a lasting impact on their awareness of the need for hygiene and other management measure to improve swine health.

Outcome of the project (so far)

The knowledge from different disciplines has been combined to develop new solutions and to improve awareness of the importance of hygiene and animal health in order to reduce the use of antibiotics. The awareness of the use of networking to achieve better pig health with less use of antibiotics has improved. Farmers, vets and consultants are making sure that they are moving forwards.

The reasons/motivations for farmers to continue what they are doing, and for changing what they are doing are not simply economic or financial. Farmers' decisions are influenced by their values, attitudes and the views of people and institutions whose expertise and opinions they respect. Therefore, existing obstacles and fears of pig-farmers, advisers and veterinarians have to be identified and considered.

Guideline for transferability of results

A guideline will be created to ensure the transferability of the developed methods and results to other workgroups/networks. This will describe the continuous improvement process and publish the OG's experiences (including visualisation of administration and communication issues).

Project activities

The OG has attended a number of national and international events to exchange experiences and to gain insight. These included: EIP-AGRI Seminar 'Moving EIP-AGRI implementation forwards' 2017 - Athens, AGRI INNOVATION SUMMIT 2017 in Lisbon and Workshop for PIG OGs – 2018 - Haus Düsse.

Article content, contact information & photo credits

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Link to a presentation (in German):

https://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/fileadmin/sites/ELER/Dateien/05_Service/Veranstaltungen/2018/OG-WS_Schweine/OG_Schweinehaltung_Hubert_Gerhardy_LERN-Netzwerk.pdf