



Cutting antibiotic use in pig farming

A Dutch farmer has achieved the enviable goal of reducing antibiotic use to almost zero while, at the same time, improving pig performance. Kees van der Meijden has taken a series of different management steps: "All of [these steps] provides us with cleaner air, higher animal health, a better working environment for the employees and fire protection!"



A massive fire in 2013 led Kees van der Meijden to make a huge reinvestment in his 1000-sow breeding farm in the Netherlands. This turned out to be an opportunity to use new and innovative techniques to reduce reliance on antibiotics by almost 100%.

Designing new accommodation



Kees said: "Our goals are high health, a high production level and to have the best training facilities. In 2014, we designed new pig accommodation, focusing on good internal and external biosecurity. Animal health is the priority and hygiene is one of the top factors for this.

"There are strict protocols for hygiene throughout the farm and we have different colours to differentiate between animal categories in different parts of the unit to

minimise any cross contamination. For example, in the farrowing room the corresponding colour is blue so the flooring and all the main equipment such as the shovels are blue."

Beneath the flooring in the farrowing house is a novel cooling system which cools down the manure to under 15°C. "The system reduces ammonia at the source and the amount of manure stored within the farm. We also re-use the heat released from the manure as energy for the piglet flooring and other farm facilities which saves energy costs.

"All of this together provides us with cleaner air, higher animal health, a better working environment for the employees and fire protection!" In fact, ammonia production has been reduced by 85%. Improvements in the breeding herd amount to production of one piglet more per sow per year than a few years ago, meaning 33 piglets per sow per year. Also, in the finishing herd, the pigs can reach the right slaughter weight three weeks earlier.

Introducing strict management protocols

As well as hygiene the other key factor is staff training and management protocols. "We have clear, detailed protocols used by all stock workers, so we can unify our working processes.

"Stockworkers are given practical training including how to recognise animal behaviour. This way, they all make the same decisions. Everyone gets the same level of information which means we can consistently deliver good results. We find the pigs are quiet and the atmosphere is relaxed which is a good indicator for a high animal welfare."

Kees also provides training and education programmes at his facility, designed for investors, pig farm managers and stock workers.



Winner of the EU PiG Grand Prix

This year Kees became an EU PiG Innovation Group (EU PiG) Ambassador having entered and won the award in the first EU PiG Grand Prix, which recognises his achievements and aims to share knowledge and best practice with other producers across Europe.

Led by AHDB (UK Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board), EU PiG is a Horizon 2020-funded thematic network of 19 partner organisations from 13 member states including pig producer groups, researchers, economic advisers and many others. It aims to look at health management, precision production, animal welfare and meat quality, improving the connection between producers and the latest science, husbandry techniques and technologies.

The annual Grand Prix contest enables producers to enter and share innovative ideas and examples of best practice from their farms, showing the rest of Europe the best of what they have to offer. Visit the EU PiG website for information and to sign up to the newsletter at www.eupig.eu

Sharing knowledge

Sharing knowledge, learning and innovation are elements of Kees van der Meijden's business which fit neatly with the aims of EU PiG. When pig producers visit another farm or go on a study tour they almost always learn something valuable and EU PiG provides an alternative way to do this.

It connects producers with each other, enabling them to find out the latest best practice and ideas from fellow producers across Europe, sharing new knowledge in one place, online – with the overall aim to improve performance and raise the competitiveness of the European pig industry.

Contact

Get in touch via EUPig@ahdb.org.uk or with a Regional Pig Innovation Group leader whose details are on the map at <http://www.eupig.eu/ambassadors>



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Photos and content: [EU PiG](http://www.eupig.eu)



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