Consent requirements for small scale piggeries

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Introduction

In NSW a common enquiry pertaining to small scale piggeries involves the legal requirements for their operation. This fact sheet explains the process all intending pig farmers should follow before you buy your first pig.

Council requirements

Check with your local council before you embark on a new land use even when changing from one agricultural enterprise to another. For example the grazing of livestock such as sheep and cattle is classified as extensive agriculture, while the raising of pigs even when they are roaming in paddocks is classified as intensive agriculture and the council requirements are different.

All councils now have a Local Environment Plan (LEP) and different geographical areas have designated Landuse classifications; for example residential, industrial or rural. Within the major Landuse classifications there may be further subdivisions and there will be restrictions on certain Landuse practices.

Council LEP’s generally require development applications (DA) for intensive agriculture which includes pigs, poultry, dairy and feedlots. This is to ensure that the land resource is managed to prevent land degradation and pollution from livestock effluent, and to prevent nuisance to neighbours.

Also the State Environment Planning Policy No 30 – Intensive Agriculture (SEPP 30) requires that a development application be submitted to council for piggeries having 200 or more pigs or 20 or more sows.

Restrictions on pig keeping in an LEP take precedence over the SEPP 30 requirements.

Conditions pertaining to the keeping of pigs can differ between different council areas. In some areas pig keeping may be prohibited. In other areas it may be permitted with development consent. If you want to keep pigs check with council before you start.

What is required in a Development Application?

Council will tell you what they require. In general it will include a site map, information on your planned piggery operations, your plans to manage effluent and contingency plans for fire or flood.

There will also need to be a Statement of Environmental Effects of the piggery development. The larger the scale of the operation, or the more sensitive the area, the more detailed this statement will need to be.

There is a useful guide on the NSW DPI website titled “Preparing a development application for intensive agriculture in NSW.”


Australian Pork Limited has produced National Environment Guidelines for Piggeries and the information in this publication assists councils and piggery developers with best management practice information.


Effluent management and odour problems

All manure smells and many people seem to be particularly sensitive to pig manure odour. Odour issues would be the major complaint against piggeries to councils. A pig voids approximately 6% of its body weight every day. Piggery waste
can have 20 to 50 times more degradable organic matter per unit volume than municipal sewage waste.

Many people assume that if their pigs are outdoors there will be no odour issues. While it is true that there seems to be less odour on outdoor piggeries than from intensive indoor units, odour problems can still occur particularly in wet and humid weather and when the piggery is poorly managed and manure accumulates and breaks down anaerobically.

**Odour reduction**

Most odour problems can be reduced if a proper effluent treatment plan is developed before the pigs arrive on farm.

If pigs are to be pastured, they need to be managed so that they are not overstocked and they can be rotated through the paddocks. This allows the paddocks to be cropped to reduce the nutrient load resulting from faecal deposition by the pigs.

If pigs are to be housed, straw bedded systems generally produce fewer odours than flushing and ponded systems.

Good planning and management is the key to the success of any piggery system. Get lazy and you will have problems managing your piggery and your council!