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Biosecurity guidelines for pig exhibits

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This Primefact provides biosecurity guidelines to minimise the risks of disease introduction and uncontrolled spread through pigs exhibited at public locations. This information is targeted toward owners who exhibit pigs to the public, and to the organisers of public pig exhibits such as agricultural shows or petting zoos.

Feeding of prohibited substances to pigs

It is estimated that an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Australia's livestock industries would cost \$13 billion in the first year. Pigs are identified as 'high risk' for the introduction of FMD into Australia. This is because:

- the introduction of FMD is most likely to come via feeding of infected meat material to pigs; and
- pigs produce up to 1500 times the amount of virus compared with ruminant animals.

The general public are unlikely to be familiar with regulations on what can and can't be fed to pigs. Prohibited food substances (swill) include meat and meat products, and table scraps that have been in contact with these items. Further details on swill feeding can be found on Primefact 637 (<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/pigs/husbandry/swill-feeding>).

To minimise the risks of swill feeding where pigs are exhibited to the public, it is recommended that:

- staff supervising pig exhibits become familiar with swill feeding regulations;
- reasonable steps are taken to minimise the contact that pigs have with 'unplanned' feedstuffs. This may include preventing the public from carrying food into pig exhibits.
- signage is clearly displayed requesting that the public do not feed pigs.

Health monitoring

The majority of diseases are spread through the introduction of subclinical 'carrier' pigs. The potential for disease transmission among pigs is high where there is co-mingling of animals from a number of different sources where their health status is not known.

A number of economically significant diseases exist within Australia's pig herd. These include:

- swine dysentery
- enzootic (*Mycoplasma*) pneumonia
- pleuropneumonia
- mange

To minimise the risk of diseases such as these spreading among pig herds, it is recommended that exhibit organisers request that pig exhibitors declare the health status of their pigs. At the very least, pig movements should be accompanied by a declaration (that is a PigPass NVD) that their animals are 'fit to travel'.

It is important that staff responsible for monitoring animals at an exhibition venue can differentiate between a healthy and a sick animal and are trained to take appropriate action. This is particularly important when a number of animals at the venue become ill in a short period of time.

Veterinary inspection of pigs on arrival and before departure from an exhibition would assist in reducing the risk of spread of disease.

There are a number of exotic diseases that are 'notifiable' – that is, there is a legal obligation to report their presence to livestock authorities. Refer to Primefact 402 (<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/health/general/notifiable-animal-diseases-nsw>).

Clinical signs that might suggest an exotic disease include:

- unusually high number of sick animals;
- unusually high number of deaths;
- blisters or vesicles on an animal's snout or feet;
- unusually high number of lame animals;
- unusually high number of animals with fevers;
- unusually high number of animals not eating;
- unusually high number of animals that do not want to get up;
- discoloration of the ears, belly, rump, legs or tail.

For more information on specific exotic diseases of pigs, refer to Primefact 955.

Preventing uncontrolled spread of disease

The ability to track the movement of pigs and their by-products is an important component of the early containment of disease. Pigs that are exhibited may return home, may be moved to another property, including saleyards, or may be sent to slaughter. The manure produced from pigs whilst being housed at an exhibition can also be a source of infection for other animals. This is of particular risk in the case of FMD.

It is important that the organisers of pig exhibits are able to track the movement of pigs post-exhibition. Exhibit organizers should keep an electronic record of all pigs that enter the exhibit, including address and contact details of the pigs' owners and ideally including the property identification code (PIC). It is also recommended that records are kept as to how the manure derived from the pigs is disposed.

Pigs returning home or arriving at a new location should be quarantined away from the main herd for 6-8 weeks post-exhibition before they are allowed contact with other pigs. This quarantine period allows for the early detection of any adverse clinical signs in exhibited pigs. Pigs in quarantine should be visited last in the day and separate clothing should be worn by those caring for quarantined animals. Any equipment in contact with pigs in quarantine should be cleaned and disinfected before being used on pigs on the home farm.

Stock owners who plan to sell their pigs at saleyards or for slaughter post-exhibition should be familiar with the requirement for identifying pigs for sale or slaughter. In NSW, any pig >25 kg liveweight presented for sale or slaughter should be identified via a carbon-based body tattoo. Pigs should arrive at the saleyard or abattoir accompanied by a valid movement document (PigPass NVD). For further information on PigPass see www.pigpass.com.au.

For further information about best practice biosecurity for exhibited pigs, please contact:

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