

Are You Prepared for a Disease Outbreak?

We ask the question as once again Britain is under restrictions for Blue Tongue disease which thankfully does not affect pigs, though the spectre of African Swine fever and other notifiable exotic disease is ever present. As many of you may have experienced in the event of an outbreak the government may call for a cull of animals to control the spread. In certain circumstances however some categories of animal may be spared if this does not interfere with the control of the disease. These categories include native and Rare breeds on the Breeds At Risk list (NBAR). Breeds on this list are regarded by government as sufficiently rare that they would be considered sparing during a cull to preserve their genetic heritage but there are no guarantees that any animal will be spared just because it is on the list.

The decision to spare is made on a case by case basis by a vet who will carry out a risk assessment of the premises where the animals are kept and the potential implications of failure to cull will be considered.

With this in mind it is wise to have a contingency plan in place so that action can be taken as soon as possible that an outbreak of a notifiable disease is announced. In drawing up a plan, a folder or file of evidence should be prepared so it can be easily reviewed by any veterinary inspector for discussion with the Chief Vet Officer (CVO) and it is suggested that the keepers own vet assesses this plan as part of the overall health plan for the farm. This will help make the CVO to be able to make a quick decision on any derogation from culling.

So what do you need to consider/;

- * Isolation facilities (buildings/fields) - welfare is paramount and animals may need to be maintained for an extended period of time inside, however geographic isolation eg a remote hillside may be an effective alternative to isolation within a building, Detailed descriptions will be required for your plan file showing location and measures to ensure continuing isolation.



- * Selection of stock—on the basis of age, sex, current status eg pregnant or lactating with young you must decide which you can save in your isolation facility this may mean choosing young females and males to breed from in the future as opposed to older already pregnant females. You must also look at the conservation status of the lines and may want to save lines that are low in population.



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Your plan should also include detailed descriptions of how you would implement the following/;

- * Signage and security of doors and gates
- * Procedures for entering and exiting the isolation area including hygiene facilities, foot dips, overalls, gloves,
- * Control of staff and visitors
- * Record keeping and reporting to APHA
- * Storage and waste disposal



This list is not exhaustive and there may be items which you want to include that are pertinent to your case for example evidence of rarity of a line.



If you show your animals it is likely you may already have an isolation unit set up and you can add its number to your file showing you already understand the necessities of isolation and what it entails. In the summer 2023 issue of Practical Pig magazine Dr Michaela Giles wrote an article about how to obtain approval for such a unit.

(We will add it to the website under the Showing

Pigs tab) the easiest way being to contact your vet as at least one of the vets in your practice will be qualified to perform your inspection and submit an application on your behalf if they are unable to assist contact your regional Animal Health Office.

It is clear that everyone who keeps animals needs to know what they could and should be doing to ensure that our rare breeds are properly protected we hope this has been useful to you and as ever we will keep you updated on any changes to this through our monthly newsletter.

With thanks to RBST, Bivatec, APHA and Mandy Garbutt for photos.

10 Steps to keep your Piggery herd Disease-Free

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- Implement strict entry protocols
- Invest in facility segmentation
- Quarantine new arrivals
- Maintain stringent hygiene practices
- Monitor and control insect and rodent populations
- Establish a vaccination program
- Enforce strict medication protocols
- Implement All-in, All-out practices
- Regularly monitor Herd health
- Stay informed and seek professional advice

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