

NZ Pork Whiteboard Session

Friday 15 January 2021

0830 – 1120

Date:	Friday 15 January 2021
Time:	08:30am – 11:20am
Location	Christchurch/Zoom

Attendees:	NZ Pork Representatives NAWAC Subcommittee MPI Representatives
Online Attendees:	NZ Pork Representative MPI Representative
Apologies:	NAWAC Subcommittee Member

Meeting Summary:

The NAWAC subcommittee met with representatives of NZ Pork following a visit to two farms hosted by NZ Pork on the previous day.

The NAWAC subcommittee gave feedback on the farm visits. The NAWAC subcommittee emphasised that welfare assessments must include a consideration of the animal's affective state.

For this reason, NZ Pork and NAWAC then discussed design features for farrowing systems. NZ Pork suggested temporary crating systems of up to 10 days as per the Recommended Best Practice of the 2010 Code. The NAWAC subcommittee members put forward several design features that they suggested would allow for the normal behaviour of pigs. These are summarised as follows:

1) Space – sufficient to allow for free movement

- a) Access to a specific dunging area separate from the lying and activity area for the sow or gilt.
- b) A safe area for the piglets.
- c) An area where the sow or gilt can nest and lie and interact with the piglets in a meaningful way.
- d) A predictable environment – so the pigs feel safe and in control.
- e) A design that allows for cross fostering when needed.

2) Suitable material for the sow or gilt to use for nesting (enabled by sufficient space) at will

3) Safety areas in the pen configuration for the piggery personnel to work with piglets and sow

Physical/health factors such as temperature control, ventilation etc. were agreed to be important. They were not discussed in detail but will be covered in the code.

During subsequent discussion, the NAWAC subcommittee made the following points:

- An accurate measure of system success must encompass the needs of all parties involved. All systems have differing pros and cons.
- If nesting material is to be provided, it should be done so in a meaningful way. The total environment should be considered, as a pig will pick and choose what is used and when and needs space to use the material. NZ Pork raised drainage and hygiene issues.
- Pigs have a desire to root and manipulate objects with their snout (e.g. rocks and sticks when outdoors) and they will aim to do these behaviours also when confined indoors.
- Trade-offs need to be avoided, as NAWAC was directed in 2016 by the Parliamentary Regulations Review Committee that a standard cannot trade off the welfare of one party for that of another.
- The industry will need to make substantial changes and hence NAWAC wants to ensure that those changes are 'futureproof'.

NZ Pork representatives reflected their concerns that, since no system currently exists that provides well for the welfare needs of all parties (pig, piglets, and farmer), there is inherent danger in imposing a system that is untested by New Zealand farmers. It could also limit adoption of some future technology, so there is no way that any long-term guarantee can be provided. Furthermore, any changes to current systems have large financial implications.

The industry representatives expressed their considerable concern about any changes that might be made to existing systems and the timeframe for their implementation given that the possible outcomes have not been well tested on New Zealand pig farms and there is a high risk to the economic viability of the sector.

Representatives from MPI noted that there are co-funding models available to primary industries to explore problem-solving and innovation, and that there is also the possibility of using farmer extension programmes for training.