



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture



Distinguished Visitor Award – Prof John Deen & Dr John Carr to Present at “Survivability – The Key to Success”

Final Report APL Project 2011/2307

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**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
On Behalf of the Queensland Pig Consultancy Group**

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1. Project Summary

A seminar “*Survivability – The Key to Success*” was organised by the Queensland Pig Consultancy Group (QPCG) to address the major causes of mortality in pig units. The event was held in Toowoomba on Friday 30 March 2012.

Sixty eight delegates from Qld representing a range of industry sectors attended the seminar to listen to Professor John Deen, Dr John Carr and local Producer, Zane Harper from CEFN discuss strategies for minimising mortality rates in piggeries.

In evaluating the event, delegates were asked to rate aspects of the seminar program (content, presentations, catering and venue) as excellent, very good, good or fair. The program was well received with 51% of delegates giving the event an overall rating of excellent and 47% a rating of very good.

2. Background

The seminar was initiated by Dr Trish Holyoake, Senior Veterinary Officer, DPI Victoria after attendance at the meeting of the Australian Pig Veterinarians (APV) in July 2011.

Pig industry mortality rates were discussed and participants agreed that average industry mortality rates exceed current APIQ recommendations, and that there is a need to investigate this further. Pre-and post-weaning mortality rates (13.9% and 7%, respectively) are above published intervention rates on many farms (10% and 4%, respectively (APIQ Implementation Manual, 2011), possibly associated with PCV2-associated disease.

The average sow mortality rate in Australia is 12% (Australian Pig Annual, 2011) while in the US, the average sow mortality rate is around 9% (PigChamp benchmarking data, Deen personal communication with Trish Holyoake). Both rates exceed the <6% intervention level and would trigger a major corrective action for a producer. There is, therefore, a need to review the major causes of mortality on pig units with producers to ensure diseases and mortality rates are minimised.

3. Objectives

This project set out to:

- 1) Fund the travel of Professor John Deen and Dr John Carr to attend and present at the "Survivability - The Key to Success" seminar in Toowoomba.
- 2) Increase adoption on strategies to reduce mortality on-farm.

4. Activities Undertaken

The QPCG held a seminar "Survivability - The Key to Success" on Friday 30 March, 2012 at the DEEDI Conference Centre in Toowoomba. Professor John Deen, Dr John Carr and local producer, Zane Harper from CEFN Pty Ltd shared their knowledge and experiences on how to minimise deaths in piggeries (Table 1).

Table 1: Seminar Program

Topic	Speaker
Why is survivability important? Benchmarking and calculating mortality costs	Prof. John Deen, University of Minnesota
Prewaning mortality – Impact of disease, environment and management	Prof. John Carr, International Consultancy
Establishing the weaned pig – a producer’s perspective	Zane Harper - CEFN
Reducing post weaning mortality by attention to management and environment	Prof. John Carr
Reducing unplanned sow culling	Prof. John Deen

5. Results

Sixty eight delegates from Qld representing a range of industry sectors (Fig 1) attended the seminar to listen to Professor John Deen, Dr John Carr and local Producer, Zane Harper from CEFN discuss strategies for minimising deaths in piggeries.

The producer sector (73% of delegates) was responsible for approximately 85% of the breeding sows in Queensland. Service providers represented 21% of delegates while other (university/research) represented the remaining 6%.

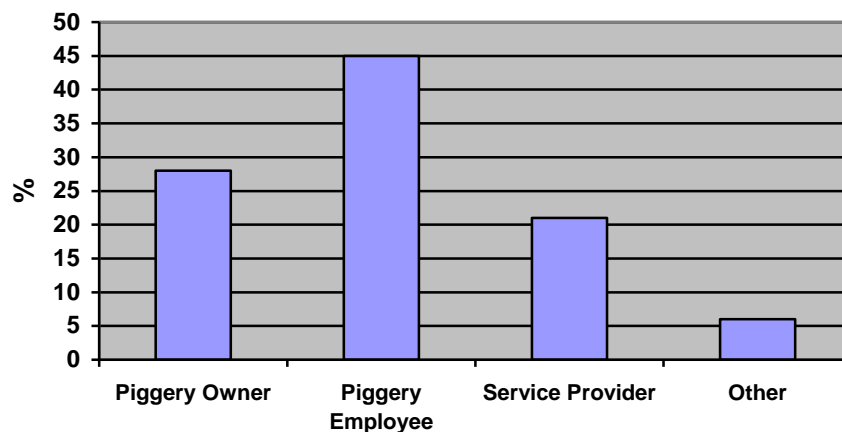


Figure 1: Sectors represented at the Survivability Seminar

In the producer sector, piggery owners represented 28% of the delegates while piggery employees represented 45% of the producer group (Fig 2). Thirty four percent came from units with greater than 1000 sows.

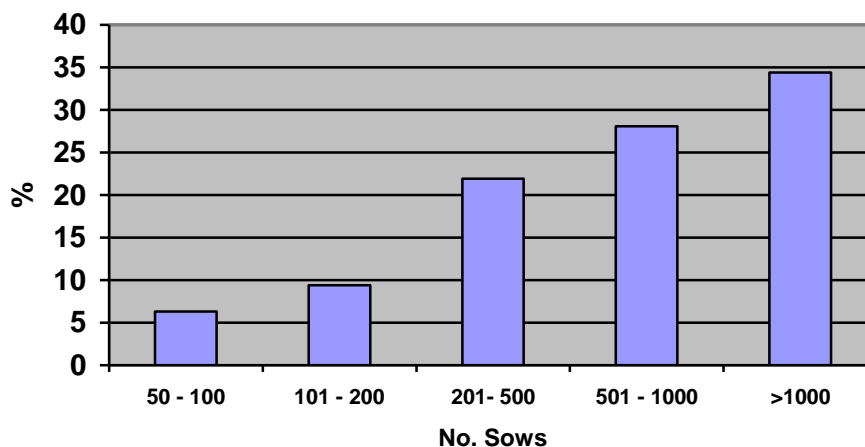


Figure 2: Size of piggery sector represented at the Survivability Seminar

In evaluating the event, delegates were asked to rate aspects of the seminar program (content, presentations, catering and venue) as excellent, very good, good or fair. The evaluation (Table 2) indicated that the program was well received by the delegates with 64% of the audience rating the seminar presentations as excellent while 32% rated the presentations very good. The evaluation summary showed that overall, 51% rated the event as excellent and 47% rated the event very good.

Table 2: Seminar Evaluation of the Sow Housing Options Seminar and Trade Display

	Response (%)			
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair
Program Content	59.6	36.2	4.3	-
Speaker Presentations	63.8	31.9	4.3	-
Catering	42.6	46.8	10.6	-
Venue	44.7	40.4	14.9	-
Overall Rating	51.1	46.8	2.1	-

Over fifty percent of respondents stated that they would like to see QPCG cover reproduction and health topics in future seminars.

Some of the written comments made by those attending included:

- “Great practical seminar for piggery owners and staff”
- “Fantastic speakers, well done organisers”
- “Great seminar - very relevant for everyone involved”
- “More producer presentations”
- “Good mix of science and producer presentations”

The evaluation form and verbal feedback confirmed that the objectives were achieved.

6. Implications

Pig industry mortality rates exceed current APIQ recommendations so there is a need to review the major causes of mortality on pig units with producers to ensure diseases and mortality rates are minimised. The seminar provided producers and key influencers including members of the QPCG an opportunity to listen to two international speakers and a local producer discuss strategies for minimising deaths in piggeries.

7. Recommendations

In developing its future program, the QPCG will take note of the delegates' feedback on topics for future seminars. The need for more information on reproduction and health topics will be considered for future seminars.

Producer presentations will continue to be part of the QPCG program.

8. Acknowledgements

This project is supported by funding from Australian Pork Limited and the Department of Agriculture.