

Update on Tail Biting projects at BQP – January 2020

Throughout 2018 to 2020 there have been various projects carried out relating to pig behaviour and the prevention of tail biting. Below is a brief bullet point summary of these projects.

- Tails Working Group - Bi-monthly meetings to discuss progressing undocked tails and ongoing trial work. A representative member of each team in BQP attends.
- Tail Biting Data Collection Software - Information is collected each time a tail biting outbreak occurs so the data can be reviewed, and trends / triggers can be identified. This process has been useful in recognising patterns in tail biting outbreaks to allow the working group to concentrate their efforts appropriately.
- Fixed Cameras Trials -The use of CCTV allows us to look closely at pig behaviour. The footage has provided us with knowledge to advise famers on management factors, including avoidance of tail biting.
- Feed Additives - Utilization of feed additives when pigs begin to show aggressive behaviour to prevent a tail biting outbreak.
- Genetics Trials - Wean to finish trials have been conducted to evaluate the physical and behavioural performance and carcass characteristics of various sire lines. Positive behavioural and performance data was collected which led to a decision to roll out a change in genetic lines onto our breeding herds. This roll out continues to be monitored.
- Long Tails - Selection of breeding farms trialled not tail docking. These pigs were then monitored on the finishing farms as 'long tailed' pigs. These were the previous sire line, further work to be conducted on updated genetics.
- Piglet Health - Various projects are ongoing seeking to improve piglet health and quality. Such as improving gut health of piglets.
- Fibre levels - A trial was conducted to investigate varying fibre levels on pig performance and behaviour, higher fibre level diets are now available as option to prevent tail biting.