

# The English Pig Health Scheme

This document explains the English Pig Health Scheme (the Scheme) and how you, as a pig producer in England, can participate.

## What is the English Pig Health Scheme?

The Scheme will screen English pigs at slaughter for animal diseases, to help you and other pig producers reduce the level of sub-clinical disease in the pig herd. It will monitor the incidence and severity of pig diseases on individual farms. It will provide you with information about the disease level in your own herd. Scheme statisticians will analyse all the information, and the resulting national data will be distributed widely. Those statistics will not include information about the disease level on your farm or any other individual farm. However, you will be able to compare your own farm's disease level with the nationally based data. The Scheme will improve welfare for pigs and the efficiency of the industry.

The Scheme will not provide definitive diagnosis of pig health conditions nor veterinary consultancy to you as an individual pig producer. It will not provide help the Scheme's assessors to provide consultancy as a result of their participation in the Scheme. Information provided by the Scheme provides only a foundation upon which you can implement pro-active health strategies in self-funded consultation with your own veterinarian as part of good agricultural practice.

The Scheme, funded by statutory levy, will be managed by the BPEX division of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) that covers the English pig sector. BPEX supports this project because the Scheme will develop health management strategies based on sub-clinical observations rather than awaiting the onset of clinical symptoms of diseased animals. It will thus have a valuable role in post-mortem carcass assessment and will enhance animal health, animal welfare and quality production. It will also develop a more pro-active relationship between you and your own private veterinarian, leading to increased industry efficiency.

## How will the Scheme operate?

The Scheme will:

- Undertake quarterly veterinary examinations of carcasses from participating farms to assess lesions to provide robust, objective post-mortem information on a number of pig health conditions, indicating the absence, presence and severity of a range of sub-clinical conditions based on histopathology.
- Collate, analyse and disseminate objective information about lesions.
- Make the resulting regional/national statistical data available to all interested parties including you, veterinarians, abattoirs, commercial sponsors, government authorities and the European Commission.
- Provide you with benchmarking data, to enable comparison of your results with the statistically analysed data for all participating pig producers.
- With your permission, providing your individual data to your veterinarian. This enables you to draw up, at your own expense, long-term strategies in association with the veterinarian to improve herd health, reduce the use of medication, encourage quality production, improve animal welfare and use relevant technical information.

- The conditions and scoring system are:

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Permitted Scores</i>
Enzootic pneumonia	0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55
Pleurisy	Blank, 1 or 2
Pericarditis	Blank or 1
Peritonitis	Blank or 1
Milk Spot	Blank or 1
Hepatic Scarring	Blank or 1
Papular Dermatitis	Blank, 1, 2 or 3
Tail-biting	Blank or 1
Viral-type distribution	Blank or 1
Pleuropneumonia – acute	Blank or 1
Pleuropneumonia – old	Blank or 1
Abscess	Blank or 1
Pyaemia	Blank or 1
Snout	Blank, 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5

### **Who will be examining the carcasses?**

The assessors will be a consortium of independent veterinarians, appointed following a public procurement process. They will have undertaken specialist training in condition scoring and will be subject to ongoing independent assessment and training as necessary to ensure consistency with the scoring protocol.

The assessors are prohibited from making any diagnosis of health issues or communicating directly or indirectly with you or other individual Scheme participants. This prohibition avoids their obtaining further economic benefit. No veterinary advice to you is funded by the Scheme.

### **Benefits of the Scheme**

You will be able to apply the information provided by the Scheme to your own farm as a tool to establish appropriate long-term health management plans in accordance with good agricultural practice, in association with your own veterinarian, at your own cost. This will improve herd health, reduce the use of medication, encourage quality production, improve animal welfare and provide you with necessary technical information.

You will benefit from a subsidised fee under the Scheme: you will pay £100 (plus VAT) for 12 assessments over 3 years. A single assessment by a private veterinarian would cost you approximately £120. The difference results from several factors:

- Economies of Scale – a Scheme assessor assesses all batches of pigs in a particular abattoir during a day, providing very significant economies of scale and avoiding the time and expenses per batch incurred where only one batch of pigs is being assessed.
- Condition Scoring not Diagnosis - only condition scoring is undertaken under the Scheme.
- Commercial Sponsorship – you do not incur the full cost of assessment under the Scheme. Commercial sponsors provide supportive funding and BPEX will provide para-fiscal support.

### **How do I apply?**

If you wish to participate in the Scheme, you must complete and return an application form. This is annexed to this document, and is also available from the BPEX website, by telephone and from other media sources including a flyer that will be included in pig industry journals. It will be provided to all pig producers in England who are currently members of the British Pig Health Scheme, which this Scheme will replace in England.

You will need to send the application form to BPEX along with your membership fee. Your details will then be entered onto the Scheme database. Once your details are on the database, any assessment of pigs linked to your membership form details will be sent to you and your associated vet.

For further information on the Scheme please contact BPEX at <http://www.bpex.org.uk>.

### **How will participants be selected?**

No participants will be selected; the Scheme will be open to all pig producers. However, please note that the Scheme will only operate assessments in 15 abattoirs (which represent 92% of pig slaughterings) because resources are limited. This will not prevent you from joining the Scheme; you will just need to submit some consignments of pigs to participating abattoirs.

### **When will the Scheme start?**

The Scheme will **start on 1 April 2008** and the last assessments will be performed in time to allow the Scheme to **close on 31 March 2013**.