

Happy New Year! We hope that you all had a restful festive period.

Controlled housing declaration

Straight back to business with a summary of the change to the requirement for declaring controlled housing status and how this is now tied in with the Red Tractor paperwork that we complete for you each quarter.

First a bit of background....

For several years farmers have been self-declaring on eAML2 and food chain information forms whether the pigs that they produce have been reared under “controlled housing” conditions or not. However, the Food Standards Agency now require external verification so that a farm or groups of pigs can be officially recognised as having been reared under “controlled” housing conditions. To this end the FSA, alongside Pig Veterinary Society, have developed a verification system that will now be used by vets when carrying out Red Tractor quarterly visits.

Why is this required?

Since leaving the EU any live pigs and pig meat must be certified by an Official Veterinarian as eligible for trade and for this they need to satisfy the *Trichinella* requirements set out by the EU for 3rd party countries. This means that meat either requires *Trichinella* testing or freezing unless the source of pigs can be certified as applying controlled housing (or if the pigs were unweaned under 5 weeks of age).

What is *Trichinella*?

Trichinella spiralis is a parasitic worm that can affect both humans and animals (including pigs). Humans and animals can become infected by eating raw or under cooked meat products that are infected by larvae of *Trichinella species*. Humans will present with a variety of symptoms including nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and cramping if they have been infected.

Controlled or not controlled?

The conditions of controlled housing are set out in EU regulation, one of which is that pigs cannot have access to the outdoors unless it can be evidenced by a risk assessment that the outdoor access they do have poses no risk of introduction of *Trichinella* to the holding. “So what does this mean for me?” I hear you say.

A large proportion of Red Tractor assured units will comply with the controlled housing requirements simply by being RT assured as they either:

1. Rear pigs in fully enclosed, indoor units where pigs never have access to the outdoors, or,
2. Wean pigs indoors or to another holding at or below 5-weeks of age from an outdoor breeding unit

Any units where weaned pigs, over 5-weeks of age have outdoor access must undergo a *Trichinella* risk assessment annually so that the application of controlled housing, or not, can be established and declared on each QVR form. If you accept pigs from another holding you will need to confirm if those pigs have been reared in controlled housing to declare on eAML2/FCI forms even if you apply controlled housing on your unit.

Meat from adult breeding pigs already undergoes *Trichinella* testing in the UK and so the application of controlled housing for breeding herds is not relevant in the declarations made.

Examples of accommodation that would require a risk assessment are (not an exhaustive list):

- Weaner tents with solid side barriers and some roof covering
- Free range weaners/finishers in paddocks with either electric or stock fencing that have access to a hut
- Straw yards with only partial roof covering +/- outdoor access

What happens now?

As we carry out the quarter one Red Tractor visits we will discuss the controlled housing declaration with you and carry out a Trichinella risk assessment if it is required. Please allow some extra time for us to complete this when we check and complete the rest of the Red Tractor paperwork. We will discuss the results of the risk assessment and any actions that are required. If the assessment identifies the unit as on the borderline between controlled and uncontrolled we will discuss alterations that can be made to achieve “controlled” status. Once changes have been made the risk assessment can be carried out again.

Further information

Please get in touch if you would like to discuss controlled housing criteria or the risk assessment in more detail. Alternatively you can find more information via Red Tractor at:

<https://redtractorassurance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/New-RT-Pig-Scheme-Trichinella-control-guidance-Autumn-22.pdf>

Wishing you all the best for 2023 and hopefully some more optimism and green shoots of recovery in the UK pig industry.

Alex