

### **ALEX FOR PVS PRESIDENT!**

Hearty congratulations go from the rest of the Pig Team to Alex who has just been appointed JVP of Pig Veterinary Society. As such, Alex will take over as President in 2 years time. This is a great honour for Alex and the wider practice and we all wish her well.

### **PATHWAY UPDATE – ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE REVIEW**

Many of you will be aware that engagement with DEFRA's Animal Health and Welfare Pathway by the pig sector has been low to date. There are likely multiple reasons that this has been the case but foremost amongst them have been :-

1. Rather onerous PRRS testing requirements mandating perceived unnecessary and stressful testing.
2. Questionable relevance to many farmers who are already actively engaging with their vet at quarterly visits regarding health and welfare of their animals.

DEFRA have clearly reflected on all of this and do now appear poised to make significant changes to address some of the concerns listed above. The actual changes are yet to be published but we understand will involve:

- a) Changes to PRRS testing protocols such that alternative PRRS testing strategies that are less invasive ( collection of oral fluids from ropes or oral swabs) will become the required option for initial Pathway visits. For follow-up annual reviews, blood samples will still be required so that sequencing work can be conducted.
- b) Linkage of Pathway involvement to current and future grant funding opportunities to support the delivery of published health and welfare priorities.
  - Smaller grants covering a selected list of equipment and technology items.
  - Larger infrastructure grants for bespoke projects such as new housing. It is my current understanding that those involved with the Pathway will benefit from a 20% lift in their grant application ranking when it comes to consideration.

So if you are considering (or even think you might be) any form of significant investment over the next few years , it may be worthwhile re-considering engagement with the Pathway. We have already successfully used Pathway funding to perform in depth environmental assessment using our Co-Peeks equipment but, in theory we can use that funded vet time for anything else that is a health or welfare priority for the farm and require more veterinary input. Please just get in touch if you think any of this might have some use on your farm.

## **SEASONAL HEALTH UPDATE.**

- Insect bites. Most will have realized it has rained rather a lot of late. If or, when, the sun finally comes out we can expect significant midge, mosquito and biting fly activity. In pigs with outdoor access, the spotty lesions over the back and flanks can appear quite dramatic.
- Zinc. It is our current understanding that the remaining zinc oxide left in feed mills expires at the end of June and as such should also be used up (ie. fed) by that time. We currently therefore expect feed mills to cease supply of zinc medicated feed in May.
- Post weaning diarrhoea and Oedema. Following from the above, high level vigilance for these problems will have to be maintained on some farms.
- Vice: Warmer weather, or at least fluctuating dismal temperatures, can be a risk factor in some systems so please be on your toes and make sure to record any instances, as well as making the necessary interventions.

## **COLD PACK RETURNS**

Our dispensary and driver teams do a great job of getting meds out onto farm in a clean and timely fashion. Some recent cold pack returns have left a lot to be desired in terms of timeliness and cleanliness. Our drivers are always happy to accept returns but only if they are clean. Please help us to maintain good biosecurity by only returning stuff as you would expect to receive it yourself!

As I write this the sun has just come out. There's hope yet !

**Richard B Pearson BVSc MRCVS**

