

A large group of white pigs is shown in a field of straw. The pigs are densely packed, and the straw is scattered on the ground. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the pigs in the foreground.

**On-farm Welfare Assessment in the
Australian Pork Industry
– *from research to practice***

7th Animal Welfare RD&E Strategy Forum

23rd November 2017

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What is welfare benchmarking?

- Tool for measuring/monitoring welfare
 - Within a farm (season, system changes)
 - Between farms (housing, genotype, stockpersonship)
 - Establish a baseline
 - Identify areas for improvement (welfare, SOP conformance)
 - Measure effect of changes
- Animal-based measures
 - Lesions, lameness, morbidity etc
 - NOT floor type, space allowance etc
 - Welfare outcomes vs the system



For industry...

- Facilitates a proactive approach to welfare
- Demonstrates industry commitment
- Ability to show incremental improvements over time
- In future?
 - Voluntary (internal use/data sharing)
 - APIQ[✓][®] X
 - Regulatory X



UK - Real Welfare

- Red Tractor Assurance Scheme (95%)
- April 2013
- Growers only (50 kg+)
- Veterinarians as assessors
- 2013-16 baseline report (5.5 million pigs)
 - 0.07% required hospitalisation (7 out of 10,000)
 - 0.18% were lame
 - 0.14% were severely tail bitten
 - 0.26% had severe body marks
 - 62% had access to substrate/32% to objects

US - PQA Plus[®]

- Built on-farm site assessment into Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) which became PQA Plus[®] in 2007
- 16 aspects of animal care & well-being through all phases of production
- Vets or certified extension agents
- Focusses on education/improvement vs verification
- May 2016 - 84% of US production sites had completed & maintained a current site assessment

US - Common Swine Industry Audit



- Producers wanting a consistent, reliable verification system to ensure on farm welfare & food safety
- Six focus areas relating to welfare:
 - Critical criteria
 - Animals
 - Caretakers
 - Facilities
 - Records/documents
 - Transport/load-out
- Purchaser determines how many/which farms are audited annually
- PQA Plus[®] 3.0 (June 2016) provides an on-farm assessment tool identical to that required for CSIA

Australia...

- APL project: *Development of Practical Measures to Benchmark Pig Welfare in the Australian Pork Industry*
- Develop an effective on-farm welfare assessment tool
 - Reliable, practical and repeatable measures
 - Be incorporated into day to day management routines
- Based on myriad of welfare indicators used around the world
- Literature review/focus group/pilot study

Measures included:

- Body condition *
- Lesions *
- Vulva bite (sows only)
- Tail bite (growers only)
- Bursitis
- Lameness *
- Stereotypic behaviour (sows only)
- Coughing/sneezing (growers only)
- Morbidity (growers only)



Australia... next steps

- APL project: *Validation of On-Farm Pig Welfare Indices*
- Examine validity of modified measures
 - Body condition, lesions, lameness
 - Compare validated with modified
 - Not as strong as hoped
 - Low variability in herd?
 - Compare inter- and intra-observer reliability
 - Moderate to high
- Westpork began implementing on-farm

Westpork's experience

- 13 sites
 - 7 breeders, 6 grow outs
 - Company-owned, contractors
 - Conventional sheds, shelters, outdoor
 - 85 staff
- One assessor
- 10 farms monthly
- Led to recommended industry protocol

Two components to an assessment

- Main measures
 - Lesions, lameness, tail/vulva bite, body condition
- Compromised measures
 - Hospital pens & main population



Main measures



- What
 - Sows 2 weeks post-mating (mixing)
 - Sows 12 weeks post-mating
 - 15 week old growers
- Why
 - Good for establishing a baseline
 - Only has ongoing value if changes are made
- When
 - Annually/biannually

Compromised measures

- What

- Hospital pens
- Not treated 'appropriately'
- Should have been euthanased
- Main population
- Should have been moved to a hospital pen
- Should have been euthanased

- Why

- Valuable risk management tool
- Identify breakdowns in SOPs or where change is needed
- Valuable training opportunities & focusses thinking on welfare

- When

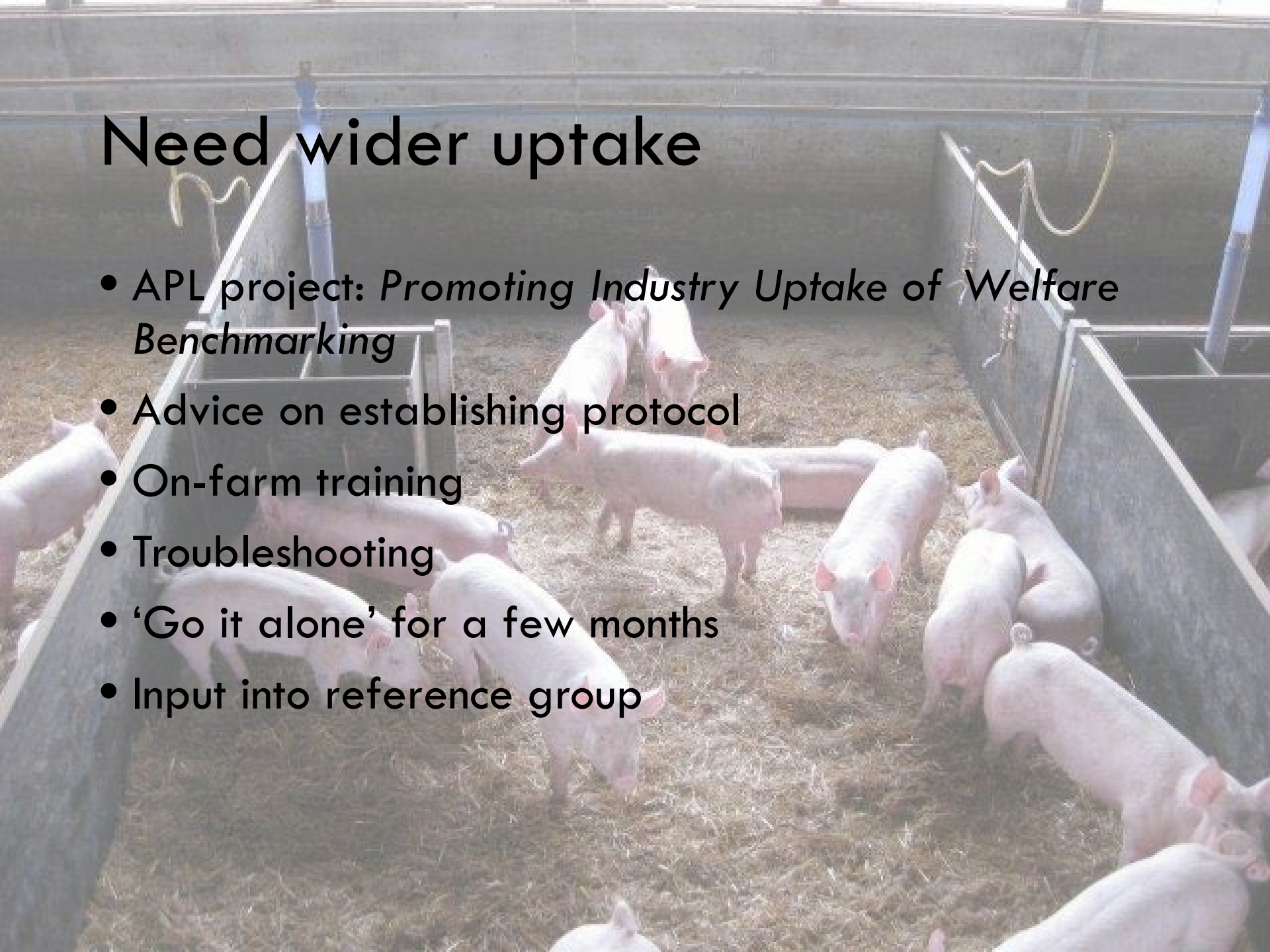
- At least monthly

Who?

- Absolutely every farm
 - Internal
 - Services role
 - Manager
 - Stockpeople
 - External
 - Vet
 - External assessor
 - Get staff on board early if planning to implement change
- 
- A photograph of a farm scene. In the foreground, a pig is visible in a grassy field. In the middle ground, there are several green, dome-shaped structures, likely pig shelters. In the background, there are stacks of hay bales, trees, and a barn. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

Need wider uptake

- APL project: *Promoting Industry Uptake of Welfare Benchmarking*
- Advice on establishing protocol
- On-farm training
- Troubleshooting
- ‘Go it alone’ for a few months
- Input into reference group



Questions producers should ask themselves...

- Am I concerned about welfare?
 - Production? Public perception? Prosecution?
- Do my staff know what my welfare standard is?
- Do I know what my welfare standard is?
 - How long's too long – treatments & euthanasia
 - How bad is too bad
 - Production over welfare
- Focusses attention & conversation
- **Ultimately, know rather than assume**

Resolve longer term...

- Ready reckoner for determining sample size
- Robust, hassle-free recording system
- Data analysis (BPEX iPig app)
- Assessor training
- Data sharing or informal discussion groups
- Trigger values?
- Establish common factors in “high” or “low” herds
- Advice on managing prevalence/factors to consider

In summary

- Absolutely every farm in Australia
- Measures are intentionally simple & quick to score
- Compromised measures will highlight areas of most risk
- Resource requirement is commensurate with farm size & desired focus
- Forces hard decisions around stance on welfare

Imagine... if welfare benchmarking figures received the same 'air time' as production figures