

# PIGS STANDARDS

## VET BRIEFING

### VERSION 5 - 1 NOVEMBER 2021



## OVERVIEW

We've reviewed our farm standards and these changes will apply from 1 November 2021.

These updates have been approved by our Technical Advisory Committee of farmers, vets, and industry experts, and Sector Board, following a public consultation. They will help members meet evolving supply chain demands and consumer expectations, best practice and legal requirements. This is not an exhaustive list, as we have focused on standards changes that are most relevant for vets. Please refer to the pigs standards manual for all detailed changes.

Find out about the main changes and why we made them in the summary below.

### The Red Tractor Team

## REMINDER

Vets play an important role in upholding the Red Tractor scheme, and the wider industry's reputation. If you encounter any issues around compliance with our standards or the law, the most effective way to raise a concern is with a member of the Red Tractor Team directly using the details below.

If you wish to report a concern anonymously, please use our independent confidential **TELL US** web reporting service by visiting [safecall.co.uk/RT](https://safecall.co.uk/RT).

A revised version of the form for quarterly vet reports will be available at [redtractorassurance.org.uk](https://redtractorassurance.org.uk) before 1 November.



[REDTRACTORASSURANCE.ORG.UK](https://redtractorassurance.org.uk)

[MEMBERHELP@REDTRACTOR.ORG.UK](mailto:MEMBERHELP@REDTRACTOR.ORG.UK)

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[FACEBOOK.COM/REDTRACTORFOOD](https://FACEBOOK.COM/REDTRACTORFOOD)



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## HOUSING, SHELTER AND HANDLING FACILITIES

**Pigs need safe, comfortable, hygienic accommodation and facilities. This is vital for pig welfare, optimum performance and food safety – and the reputation of the UK pig sector. There are several revised and/or new standards in this area, including protecting pigs from extreme weather.**

HF.2.1

Members now need to have a documented extreme weather contingency plan. This will detail the measures to be taken in unusually hot/cold weather, snow, severe wet weather and ventilation failure.

HF.4

We know pigs will sometimes lie in the dunging area, for example, in hot weather. However, if this behaviour continues it suggests the pigs' environmental needs are not being met. The standards are now clear that pigs must have access to a dry lying area and steps must be taken to ensure pigs can keep clean.

HF.5

We have strengthened our lighting standards to reflect legal requirements and industry best practice. At least eight hours of continuous light and six hours of continuous dark is now required. Pigs must be able to access an area lit to at least 40 lux.

HF.9.4

If sows spend too long in a farrowing crate, it can affect their welfare. That's why we've set a new standard of five weeks as the maximum time sows can remain in crates after farrowing. If the sow is suckling additional piglets as a nurse sow, this may however be extended to eight weeks, depending on her condition.

HF.9.5

Sows must be provided with material to enable natural nest-building behaviour. This is vital for sow welfare and for improving farrowing and lactation. Members must provide all sows with nest-building material, like natural rope, hessian, or straw, in at least the 24-hour period up to farrowing. This applies regardless of flooring type.

## FEED AND WATER

**Pigs must have access to clean drinking water. This will limit the spread of pathogens to pigs and protect food safety and pig health. Reducing the incidence of disease will in turn lessen the need for medication including antibiotics.**

FW.3.2

If a private water supply shows bacterial contamination above the threshold when tested, members must now investigate and act.

## HEALTH AND WELFARE

**Compassionate care of pigs is vital for their welfare and ensures a quality product.**

AH.2

Members already keep health and performance records. Now they must also record incidents of tail biting, as well as overall mortality figures.

AH. 6

Ensuring pigs are handled in a way which avoids injury and stress is a priority for Red Tractor and the sector. Our revised standard and new appendix detail what is and is not acceptable to us when it comes to pig handling.

AH.8 /  
AH.8.1

We've made clear our requirements on using passageways as isolation facilities for sick or injured pigs. Pig euthanasia is a hard subject for consumers. Our standards centre on ensuring, when required, this is done promptly and humanely so that pigs do not suffer.

AH.9 /  
AH.9.1

Initial euthanasia training must now be carried out by a vet or via a Humane Slaughter Association course. Additionally, stockperson competency in euthanasia must be assessed every two years, rather than every three, and by a vet. The farm's euthanasia policy must now also include contingency procedures and be signed by a vet, to confirm these are appropriate.

AH.9.3

When using a mechanical device for piglet euthanasia, our standards now align with the Humane Slaughter Association's guidance so it is effective and humane.

AH.12

Enrichment satisfies a pig's desire to root, manipulate and explore its surroundings. All pigs must always have access to enrichment, including sows in farrowing crates. Our new enrichment standard is stronger in line with Defra's Code of Practice. This requires specific combinations of enrichment materials and objects to ensure pigs' needs are met.

## ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

**Ensuring husbandry procedures are carried out competently is important for pig welfare.**

HP.1

We must ensure that where husbandry procedures are carried out, they are done so appropriately and as such only those listed in the Veterinary Health Plan may be undertaken.

HP.2

Red Tractor's position on the use of immunocastration products has been incorporated into the standards. This is allowed with written permission from a member's processor customer(s). Surgical castration remains prohibited.

HP.3

Members must provide evidence to show why docking is needed, supported by a detailed quarterly veterinary review.

HP.3.1

All units must take measures to minimise the risk of tail biting and avoid the need for docking. This includes an annual risk assessment on all units and an action plan on farms rearing docked pigs.

HP.5

Nose ringing must now be done by someone deemed competent by a vet.

HP.5.1

Only one septum ring is allowed.

## BIOSECURITY AND DISEASE CONTROL

**Biosecurity measures help prevent disease from spreading and protect food safety and animal health. Members will already have clearly defined biosecure areas to manage the flow of people and vehicles to minimise these risks.**

BI.3

We now require that members define an overall site biosecure area and use visible markers at vehicle entry points into biosecure areas.

BI.4.1

Fallen stock vehicles go from farm to farm and can transmit disease. These vehicles are no longer allowed to enter the farm's overall site biosecure area.

BI.1.1

If there is an outbreak of disease on farm, it is helpful if nearby farms are made aware. That way they can tighten their biosecurity and reduce the risk of disease spreading to their farm. Members must now sign up to the Significant Diseases Charter and report disease outbreaks. The vet must indicate on the quarterly veterinary report whether diseases have been reported in line with the Charter.

## MEDICINES

**In recent years, the pig industry has made huge progress in reducing antibiotic use and ensuring they are used responsibly.**

AM.3.1

Having a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding is key to the success of any strategy to better manage medicine use, and demonstrates a professional approach to the wider supply chain. We've added a new requirement that someone has been trained in the responsible use of medicines.

AM.8.1

Vets already review the antibiotic use on a member's unit each year. Now we also want vets to recommend alternative disease control measures, where possible, to minimise the prophylactic use of antibiotics.

AM.8.2

Members identified as a “persistent high user” of antibiotics on their eMB report must now develop an Antibiotic Reduction Plan in conjunction with their vet. The vet also needs to indicate on their quarterly report whether the plan is being implemented.

## OUTDOOR PIGS

**Wild animals can spread diseases to pigs including trichinella and TB.**

OP.10

We now require you to document and implement a wild animal control plan of measures to minimise this contact. This aligns with the Defra Code and will help meet statutory requirements around trichinella testing.