Pig Health and Welfare Council

Biennial Report

2023–2024

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Foreword

As Chief Veterinary Officers for the four nations of the UK, we are pleased to introduce the seventh biennial report of the Pig Health and Welfare Council (PHWC). This report reflects not only the challenges faced by the pig sector over the past two years but also the resilience, innovation and collaboration that continue to define it.

PHWC remains a vital forum where science, policy and practice converge. It brings together voices from across the pork supply chain – producers, processors, vets, researchers, governments and their regulators – fostering a shared commitment to improving pig health and welfare. This unified approach has never been more important, as pig production navigates pressures ranging from disease threats and antimicrobial resistance to evolving welfare expectations, economic uncertainty and the urgent need for environmental sustainability. The Council's work supports a sector striving not only to be resilient and productive, but also to reduce its environmental footprint and contribute to a more sustainable food system.

We commend the Council's continued leadership in supporting national initiatives to improve pig health and welfare across the UK. In England, the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) has enabled producers to access funded vet visits, porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) testing and grants for welfare-enhancing equipment. Scotland has strengthened its PRRS control programme and updated welfare guidance, supported by Wholesome Pigs Scotland and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) assurance schemes. In Wales, the Sustainable Farming Scheme's Animal Health Improvement Cycle is driving proactive vet-led herd planning and biosecurity management. Northern Ireland continues to support producers through industry-led initiatives such as the PRRS Programme, access to peer-learning programmes such as Business Sustainability Groups and targeted welfare enforcement under Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). These efforts reflect the strength of regional approaches and shared goals across the four nations. We encourage continued engagement from keepers of small and large pig herds to maximise the impact of these programmes.

The Council's subgroups have each made significant progress. From advancing surveillance and preparedness for diseases such as PRRS and African swine fever (ASF), to promoting responsible antimicrobial use and enhancing food safety, their work is both strategic and practical. The Welfare subgroup's efforts to support the transition to free farrowing systems and reduce tail docking are particularly important, reflecting the sector's commitment to pig welfare and continuous improvement.

In closing, we extend our thanks to all those involved in PHWC, whose dedication, expertise and collaborative spirit are helping to shape a pig industry that protects pig health and welfare, is productive, sustainable and forward-looking. We wish you well in continuing this progress.

Christine Middlemiss
Chief Veterinary Officer (UK)

Richard Irvine
Chief Veterinary Officer (Wales)

Sheila Voas
Chief Veterinary Officer (Scotland)

Brian Dooher
Chief Veterinary Officer (Northern Ireland)

Introduction

Welcome to the seventh biennial report from the Pig Health and Welfare Council (PHWC), providing a summary of the activities of the Council and its constituent subgroups during 2023–2024.

The Council has continued to fulfil its role in bringing members of the entire pork chain together to identify the key challenges to health and welfare and to propose appropriate solutions for the industry. The Council benefits from having four sub-groups within its structure, which allow those with specialist knowledge to contribute to specific challenges. Without the support and commitment of all the individuals, companies, businesses, NGOs and government departments which permit their staff to give their time without charge, the Council would not be able to support the industry by speaking with one voice, for the benefit of the health and welfare of our pig herd and the production of safe pork.

The pig industry continued to face major challenges in this post-Covid period, with ongoing difficulties experienced in the abattoir sector and the inevitable knock-on effect of more and larger pigs being kept on farm. Despite this, the industry responded effectively to the situation, put welfare first and, while sadly some producers had to reduce numbers, there was no notable increase in disease or welfare incidents.

The Council has continued to represent the industry in support of the ongoing development of the Defra Animal Health and Welfare Pathway for England (AHWP). The Council encourages all producers to take advantage of the Government funding available to complete a veterinary and endemic disease review, which is aimed at enhancing vet/producer relationships and enabling the identification, control and reduction or elimination of porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS).

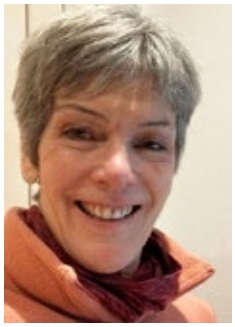
PRRS, a viral disease affecting only pigs, continues to cause the greatest impact on the productivity of a pig unit and its profitability. By controlling the disease, the industry will protect producers who have achieved a negative PRRS status, improve the welfare of our pigs and, importantly, contribute to improvements in antibiotic stewardship.

Each subgroup has achieved significant outcomes during 2023–2024. The Welfare subgroup contributed to projects around the elimination of tail docking and the introduction of adaptive farrowing. Their collaborative efforts with the Building group have led to significant improvements in the production environment.

The Food Safety subgroup continues to work closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to detect possible links between pork consumption and human foodborne diseases; with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to reduce the risk of zoonotic disease on-farm; and with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) to ensure pork is safe to eat.

The Pig Health subgroup has been involved in actions to maintain UK notifiable disease freedom, as well as planning to reduce the impact should diseases such as African swine fever (ASF) or porcine epidemic diarrhoea (PED) be identified. Endemic diseases were monitored and actions to reduce their impact disseminated.

The Antimicrobial Usage subgroup continues to fulfil a major role on the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) antibiotics Targets Task Force, with responsibility for setting the target for antimicrobial use in the pig industry. Improvements in health and welfare will reduce the need for antibiotic use, but there are always ongoing challenges. The knowledge of current usage, disease profiling and the impacts of legislative change, such as the prohibition of the use of zinc oxide as a feed additive, are all brought into consideration, the aim being to set an ambitious target which minimises the use of antibiotics where possible, at the same time as ensuring that pigs can receive treatments, if necessary, thus upholding the health and welfare of the animals in our care.



Jane Downes
Chair

The pig industry structure

Size and distribution of the industry

Size of the UK pig herd

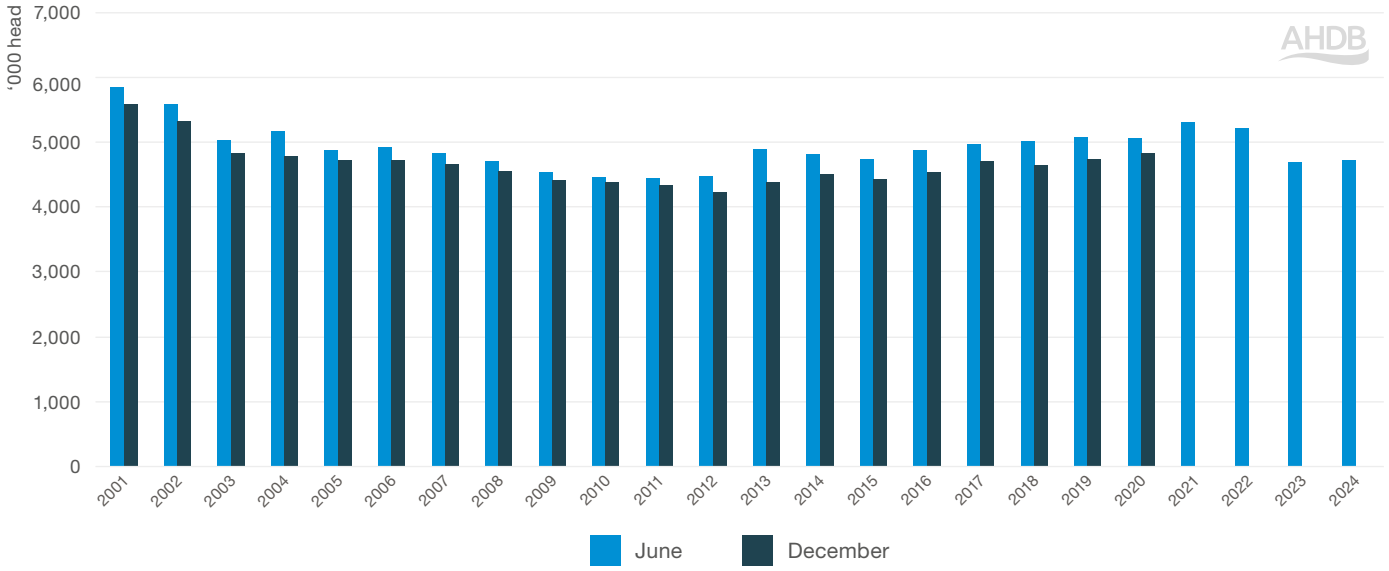
- The latest Defra figures (Figure 1) show that the overall pig population stood at 4.72 million head as of 1 June 2024, while in June 2023 the pig population stood at 4.68 million head, which was the smallest pig population recorded in the UK since 2012
- The small year-on-year increase of 0.7% (32,000 head) seen in the overall UK pig population has been driven by an uplift in the number of fattening pigs. At 4.30 million head, fattening pig numbers have grown by approximately 1% (40,000 head) year-on-year but remain significantly lower than the 10-year average
- The female breeding herd recorded a loss for the third consecutive year, back 11,000 head (3.1%) to 327,000 head as of 1 June 2024 (Figure 2). Half of this decline was driven by a fall in the number of gilts in-pig, with other sows (those either being suckled or dry sows kept for further breeding) also recording significant losses. Sows in-pig saw a smaller decline. Boars being used for service also fell for the third year in a row
- This has resulted in total breeding pig numbers standing at 421,000 head – a 1.7% loss (7,000 head) compared with the same point in 2023 (Figure 3). On the contrary, other breeding pigs saw an increase in 2024, rising by 3.7% from 90,000 head to 93,000 head. Gilts intended for first-time breeding grew by 4,000 head (4.6%), offsetting some of the decline

Table 1. Breakdown of the female pig breeding herd in the United Kingdom on 1 June (number of pigs)

Year	Sows in pig	Gilts in pig	Other sows	Total
2020	295,309	56,741	50,147	402,197
2021	281,954	53,636	62,808	398,398
2022	247,004	42,304	53,794	343,102
2023	238,228	47,808	51,897	337,933
2024	236,210	42,579	48,517	327,306

Source: Defra

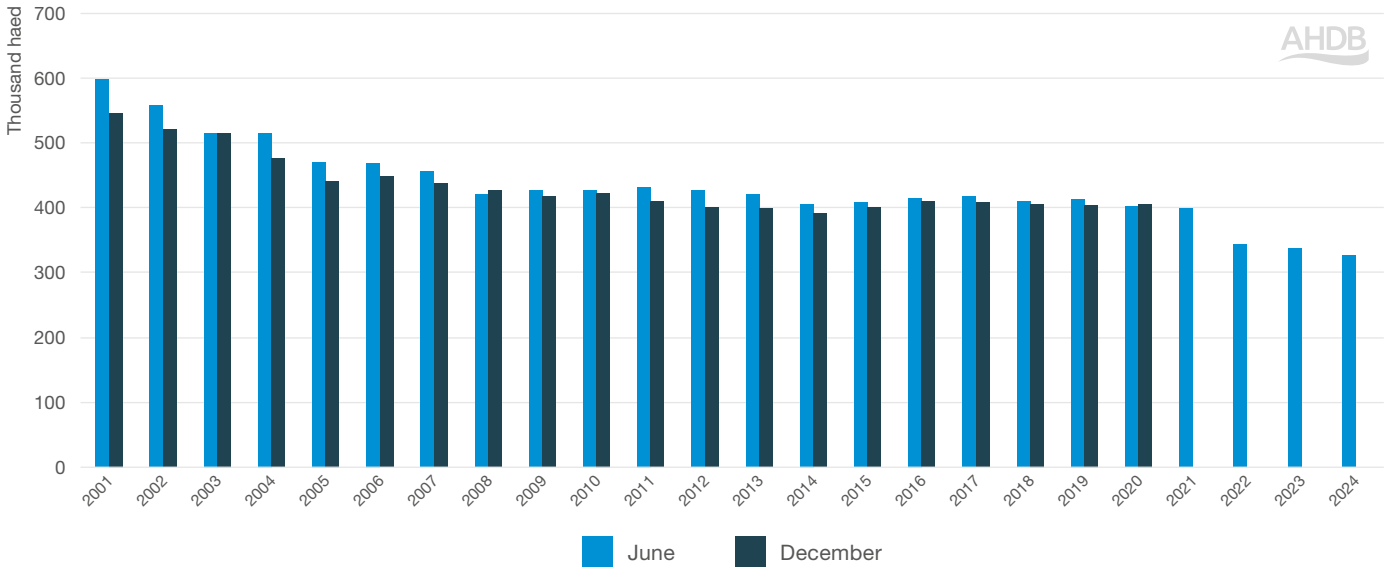
Other sows are those either being suckled or dry sows kept for further breeding.



Source: Defra

Figure 1. UK total pig population June/December*

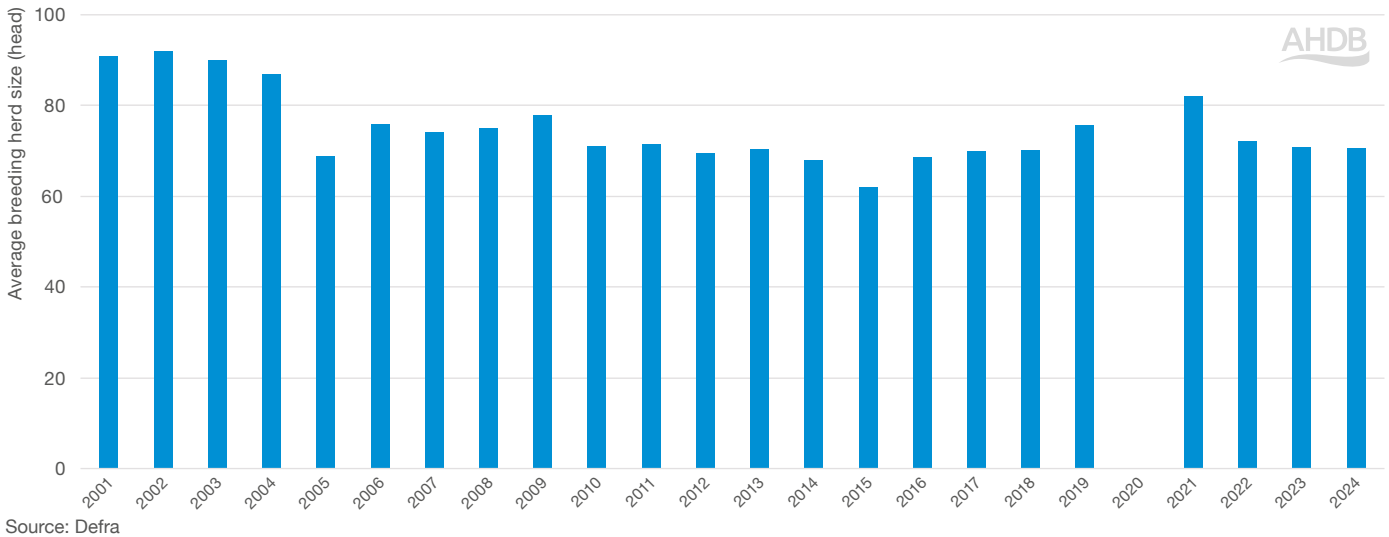
*The December UK data is no longer published.



Source: Defra

Figure 2. UK breeding female pig population June/December*

*The December UK data is no longer published.



Source: Defra

Figure 3. UK average breeding herd size on 1 June 2024

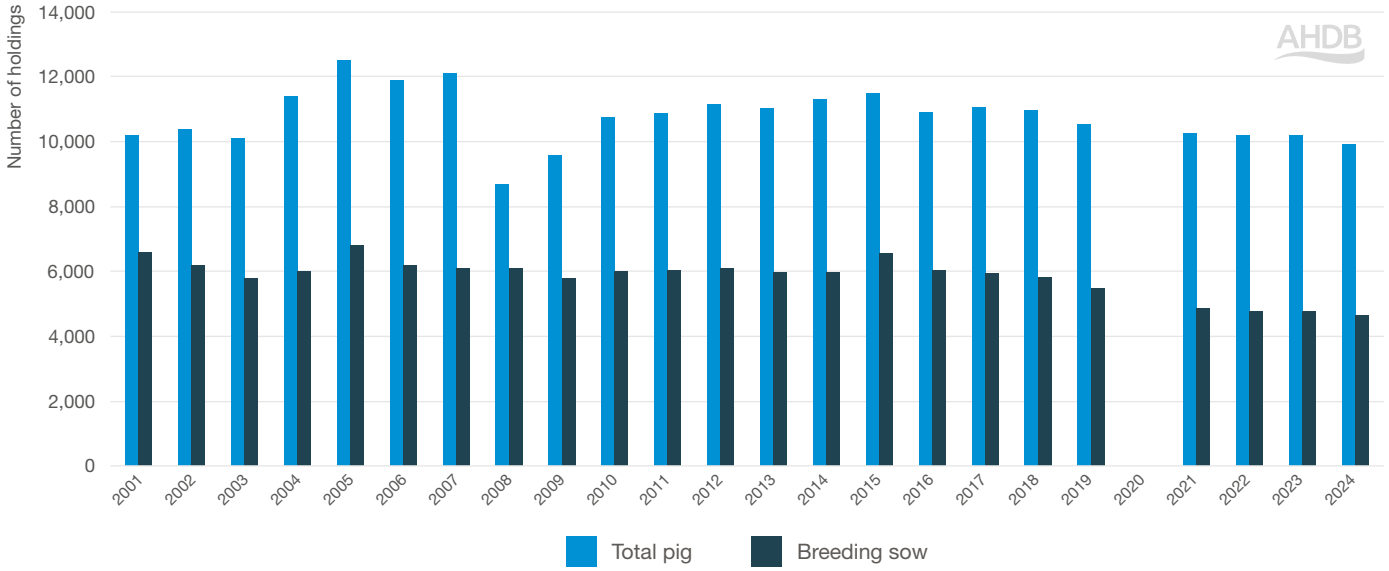
Number and size distribution of commercial holdings

From the data available, from 2021 to 2024 (Figure 4), the UK pig farming industry has seen a steady decline in the number of smaller commercial holdings, while larger operations have remained almost stable. This trend reflects ongoing consolidation within the sector, driven by economic pressures, regulatory compliance costs and productivity improvements on larger farms.

Location of pig producers

Pig producers are highly geographically concentrated. As of June 2024 (Table 2), the total pig population in the UK is 4.7 million and England accounts for 78% of the total population, with approximately 3.6 million pigs as of December 2024. Northern Ireland holds a 15% share and Scotland holds 7%. Wales accounts for less than 1% of the total population. Over the last five years, the split has stayed relatively stable, with Northern Ireland gaining a 2% share and England easing 2%.

Yorkshire and the Humber host many large commercial farms and accounts for 40% of England's pig population, making it the largest pig production region. East of England represents 28%, with the remaining numbers spread across the rest of the country.



Source: Defra

Figure 4. UK pig holding numbers

*Change in methodology to exclude English non-commercial holdings from 2010 (inclusive) onwards.

Table 2. UK pig population spilt by country

	Total pigs		Breeding pigs		Fattening pigs (incl. barren sows)	
Country	**'000 head**	**YOY change**	**'000 head**	**YOY change**	**'000 head**	**YOY change**
England	3,680	1.3%	326	-1.0%	3,354	1.5%
Scotland	316	-8.2%	36	-9.8%	279	-8.0%
Wales	28	12.2%	2	-7.6%	26	14.3%
Northern Ireland	692	1.4%	56	-0.1%	636	1.6%
United Kingdom	**4,716**	**0.7%**	**421**	**-1.7%**	**4,295**	**0.9%**

Source: Defra

Abattoirs slaughtering pigs

The number of abattoirs slaughtering pigs has declined considerably over time as many small plants have stopped trading and have been replaced by fewer, larger ones (Table 3). In 2021, there were 87 English abattoirs killing pigs – almost 100 fewer abattoirs than at the start of the millennium – only 11 of these specialised in pigs. The latest figures show that only 81 slaughterhouses killed pigs in 2024 – six fewer than 2021. The number of specialists plants* has also reduced, now standing at eight. England dominates pig slaughtering, with most large-scale facilities concentrated in the regions with high pig populations, such as Yorkshire and East of England.

Table 3. Size profile of pig abattoirs in England, 2021–2024

Pig abattoirs	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total pig abattoirs	87	86	84	81
Pig slaughtering ('000 head)	9,291	9,221	8,199	8,374
Average throughput ('000 head)	106.8	107.2	97.6	103.4
Specialist pig abattoirs*	11	10	10	8

Source: AHDB

*Specialist abattoirs are abattoirs where 95% of slaughtering are pigs.

Pig meat production in the UK went from strength to strength in 2024, surpassing initial expectations despite a further decline in the breeding herd. In 2023, the number of clean pigs slaughtered in UK declined sharply to 8.17 million, marking the lowest figure in the five-year period. In 2024, this number showed a modest recovery, rising to 8.34 million. Higher average carcase weights resulted in pig meat production growth of 3.7% year-on-year, to a total just under 961,000 tonnes.

Annual numbers of pigs slaughtered

In 2024, the number of pigs slaughtered in Great Britain stood almost stable after a notable decline experienced in 2023 (Table 4).

Table 4. Annual numbers of pigs slaughtered in GB 2020–2024

Year	Clean pigs	Sows and boars
2020	8,971	241
2021	9,462	262
2022	9,226	244
2023	8,174	199
2024	8,340	195

Source: AHDB

Workforce on pig farms

Detailed figures are only available for England's specialist pig farms in 2023. A total of 6,000 workers were employed – an average of four per holding. Almost 55% of workers on specialist pig farms were 'farmers, partners, directors and spouses', working either full-time or part-time. Around 32% were regular full-time workers or managers (including part-time managers), with the remaining 23% being made up of part-time and casual workers. The number of people working on non-specialist pig farms is unknown. From 2023 onwards, newly registered farm holdings are only included in the population holding counts once farming activity levels have been confirmed through a survey response. This methodology change will lead to more accurate statistical estimates of the farming population each year.

Key facts

- Since the peak of production in 1997/98, the total number of pigs on UK agricultural holdings fell from 8.1 million to 4.68 million head in June 2023. A small year-on-year increase in the overall pig population led to 4.72 million head as of 1 June 2024
- After a sharp decline in 2022, the female breeding herd recorded a loss for the third consecutive year, reaching approximately 327,000 head as of 1 June 2024
- In 2023, there were 10,200 commercial agricultural holdings with pigs in the UK: 4,800 had female breeding pigs and 8,500 had fattening pigs, with numbers concentrated on larger farms
- Of the 4.7 million pigs in the UK, England accounts for 78% of the total pig population, with Northern Ireland holding a 15% share and Scotland 7%. Wales accounts for less than 1% of the UK pig population
- The latest figures show that only 81 slaughterhouses killed pigs in 2024, that is six fewer than 2021. The number of specialists plants has also reduced, now standing at eight
- Approximately 6,000 people work on England's specialist pig farms, alongside others working with pigs on non-specialist farms, although the number of these is uncertain

About PHWC

The Pig Health and Welfare Council (PHWC) is a cross-industry alliance representing every stage of pig production along the chain. It aims to promote a coordinated and integrated approach to improving pig health and welfare by providing advice on areas of strategic policy and setting strategies. PHWC was formed in 2004 to drive the implementation of the Pig Health and Welfare Strategy, launched previously in December 2003. Following the review of progress, a new strategy for pig health and welfare in England was developed with the input and support of a broad range of industry organisations, coordinated by AHDB Pork – the division with responsibility for the levy collected on pigs by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).

PHWC recognises that its ongoing enterprises must be openly discussed with all interested parties in the pig sector and that results are communicated at all levels from the farmer to government and Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), when necessary. The main responsibility of PHWC is to enhance the health and welfare of pigs in England.

Key areas of focus are surveillance and disease risk assessment, promotion of welfare and prudent antimicrobial usage through improved disease management. A longer-term priority of PHWC is to review the methods for integration of existing and future data sources considered to be of surveillance value to provide a comprehensive surveillance system for pig health and welfare.

PHWC subgroups now cover the following areas:

- Antimicrobial Usage subgroup – improving antimicrobial stewardship in pig production
- Pig Health subgroup – enhancing surveillance of pig health
- Pig Meat Food Safety subgroup – enhancing pig meat food safety
- Welfare subgroup – enhancing pig welfare

PHWC membership organisations

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) is a statutory levy board funded by farmers and others in the supply chain. Our purpose is to be a critical enabler, to positively influence outcomes, allowing farmers and others in the supply chain to be competitive, successful and share good practice. We equip levy payers with easy-to-use products, tools and services to help them make informed decisions and improve business performance. Established in 2008 and classified as a Non-Departmental Public Body, AHDB supports the following industries: meat and livestock (beef, lamb and pork) in England; dairy in Great Britain; and cereals and oilseeds in the UK. For further information, visit **ahdb.org.uk**

Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) is the UK agricultural supply industry's leading trade association and represents businesses in key sectors within the supply chains that feed the nation. Formed in October 2003 by a merger of three trade associations, AIC has over 230 members in the agri-supply trade and represents £17.8 billion turnover at farmgate.

Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) works to safeguard animal health and welfare, as well as plant and bee health, for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy. Its main areas of work include scientific research, surveillance of new diseases, inspection and providing an emergency response to control animal disease outbreaks. APHA is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and works on behalf of the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government.

Animal Health and Welfare Board for England (AHWBE) is responsible for strategic animal health and welfare policy and oversight of implementation in relation to England, taking account of public health considerations.

British Meat Processors Association (BMPA) represents the majority of companies working in the British meat industry and owns the standards for BQAP (British Quality Assured Pork) and uses the Red Tractor logo. Its members are responsible for supplying fresh meat and meat products to retailers, restaurants and foodservice companies throughout the UK and exports to the European Union (EU) and around the world.

British Pig Association (BPA) supports all pedigree pig breeders and small-scale producers. The association can provide information on many aspects of pig keeping, either directly within the office or through the different breed representatives who are pig keepers and are, therefore, in a good position to answer any questions. BPA is a friendly organisation with a focus on conserving our native pig breeds and small-scale sustainable pork production.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is the UK government department responsible for safeguarding our natural environment, supporting our world-leading food and farming industry and sustaining a thriving rural economy. Our broad remit means we play a major role in people's day-to-day life, from the food we eat and the air we breathe to the water we drink.

National Pig Association (NPA) is the representative trade association for British commercial pig producers, is affiliated to the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and represents the interests of NFU members that produce pigs and the pig industry interests of its allied industry members.

Northern Ireland Pork & Bacon Forum (NIPBF) was established to promote the local pig meat supply chain in Northern Ireland. The forum, which comprises processors, producers, the grain trade, government and scientists all supporting Northern Ireland interests, actively participates in market research, promotion and technical investment for the industry.

Pig Veterinary Society (PVS) was founded in 1963. It is a specialist division of the British Veterinary Association (BVA). PVS exists to assist its members in caring for pigs through the dissemination of knowledge about health, disease, the pig's welfare and its management.

Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) is the public body responsible for helping the Scottish red meat sector improve its efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

Red Tractor (RT) is the flagship logo of British food; their comprehensive standards underpin farming, consumer safety, food production, processing and packing along the whole chain. Thousands of British farmers work to their standards, which form the basis of buying and sourcing specifications for many major supermarkets, household brands and restaurant chains, which ultimately makes life simpler for everyone. They are the UK's largest food and farm standards scheme and the only one to cover all areas of food production, from animal welfare and food safety to traceability and environmental protection – simply put, from farm to pack. Only food that is grown or born and reared in the UK can bear the RT logo.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is the world's oldest and largest animal welfare charity, specialising in animal rescue and furthering the welfare cause for all animals, across England and Wales.

Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) was established in November 1997 to promote the highest standards of food safety, animal health and animal welfare in the British livestock industry. It is a unique, independent non-profit group involving organisations that represent all stages of the food chain from 'farm to fork'. This reflects the importance of traceability, transparency and accountability at all stages in the chain: from primary food production through processing, manufacturing and retailing to the final consumer. Its membership includes organisations operating in agriculture, aquaculture, veterinary practice, animal medicines, farm assurance, training, retail and animal welfare.

Trading Standards is a service provided by local authorities in the UK to protect consumers and businesses by ensuring fair trading practices and compliance with various laws and regulations. Trading Standards protects consumers and safeguards businesses through cross-boundary intelligence-led enforcement, with some work, including eCrime, Feed, Regional Investigations, Estate Agency, Intelligence and Scams teams, co-ordinated centrally. The scope of Trading Standards includes a wide range of areas, such as product safety, consumer rights, and animal health and welfare.

In addition to the formal organisations, there are producer members on all the Council subgroups to represent the diverse production systems within the UK. Observers invited to attend PHWC meetings include the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the CVOs for England (Christine Middlemiss), Wales (Richard Irvine) and Scotland (Sheila Voas).

The Council meets twice per annum and is chaired by Dr Jane Downes BVSc MRCVS. The agenda is split between subgroup delivery updates and strategic policy debate.

The work of PHWC would not be possible without the valued support of the secretariats. The secretariat for the PHWC and Pig Meat Food Safety, Pig Health and Welfare subgroups is provided by AHDB. The secretariat for the Antimicrobial Usage subgroup is provided by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

PHWC is coordinated and funded by AHDB. AHDB financially supports PHWC by paying the chair and subgroup chairs an honorarium and for the costs associated with meetings. It is also acknowledged that many organisations fund members attending the meetings. This support is essential for the continuation of this productive and efficient collaboration of the industry.

Welfare subgroup

The Welfare subgroup aims to develop strategies and initiatives to address welfare issues applicable to the diverse production methods within the UK pig industry. The subgroup aims to bring a consensus on the key pig welfare issues by working closely with those in the pig industry, allied industries, vets and paraprofessionals, welfare scientists, consumer organisations and government.

The subgroup meets twice per annum, chaired by Dr Annie Davis BVMS MRCVS. The agendas focus on knowledge exchange and coordination of activity and policy influence regarding pig welfare.

The members of the group are:

- Academia
- AHDB and AHDB Pork Sector Council
- Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)
- Assured Food Standards (AFS)/Red Tractor
- Buildings Forum
- National Pig Association (NPA)
- Northern Ireland Pork & Bacon Forum (NIPBF)
- Pig Veterinary Society (PVS)
- Producer members
- Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)
- RSPCA

Pig Meat Food Safety subgroup

The Pig Meat Food Safety subgroup aims to be the authoritative group for zoonotic hazards in pig meat production. This encompasses policy, surveillance, research, management and control. Therefore, collaboration with government, pig keepers, producers, vets, processors, retailers and allied industries is critical.

The role of the Pig Meat Food Safety subgroup is to assist the industry in reducing the risk to the consumer from pork meat and products. The subgroup aims to develop a roadmap to improve pig meat safety. This involves investigation and evaluation of current knowledge on reducing zoonotic-related food risks and commitment from the whole industry to ensure whole chain ownership of the roadmap.

The subgroup meets quarterly, with additional calls when required, chaired by Dr Jane Downes BVSc MRCVS. The agendas focus on knowledge exchange, coordination of activity and policy influence regarding food safety, and technical input to industry regarding media coverage or food safety topics.

The members of the group are:

- Academia
- Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)
- AHDB and AHDB Pork Sector Council
- Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)
- Assured Food Standards (AFS)/Red Tractor (RT)
- British Meat Processors Association (BMPA)
- British Pig Association (BPA)
- British Retail Consortium (BRC)
- Food Standards Agency (FSA)
- National Pig Association (NPA)
- Northern Ireland Pork & Bacon Forum (NIPBF)
- Pig Veterinary Society (PVS)
- Processors
- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)
- Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)

Pig Health subgroup

The three objectives of relevance to the Pig Health subgroup as a vision for 2020–2030 include:

- Maintain and extend our disease surveillance system
- Reduce, control or eliminate endemic and zoonotic diseases
- Encourage the use of data and new technologies

The Pig Health subgroup advises PHWC on proposals for effective surveillance of pig health in England. In addition, the subgroup continues to focus on disease control and prevention procedures, as well as surveillance. This involves continuing to identify and evaluate disease threats through various approaches to surveillance and monitoring. This information is used to formulate strategies of benefit to the UK pig industry and recommend appropriate courses of action for the prevention, reduction or eradication of significant diseases.

To achieve this, it is important to have a close working relationship with the APHA Pig Expert Group, which regularly reviews current and emerging disease threats. The Pig Expert Group meets regularly and produces quarterly reports on disease surveillance and emerging threats. These reports summarise disease trends and threats to the pig industry from either diseases present or emerging in Great Britain or those with the potential to enter Great Britain from elsewhere.

The remit of the Pig Health subgroup covers England, with observers invited from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in recognition that the UK is one unit. Members of the Pig Health subgroup have participated in a number of other committees and working groups, especially the various groups developing the pig health components of the AHWP. The group has successfully delivered on its 2021/22 milestones, as shown in the Milestones section of this report. The subgroup meets twice per annum, with additional calls when required, chaired by Dr Jim Morris BVM&S MRCVS.

The agendas focus on knowledge exchange and coordination of activity and policy influence regarding pig disease control and surveillance.

The members of the group are:

- Academia
- Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)
- AHDB and AHDB Pork Sector Council
- Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)
- Animal Health and Welfare Board for England (AHWBE)
- Assured Food Standards (AFS)/Red Tractor (RT)
- British Pig Association (BPA)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Food Standards Agency (FSA)
- National Pig Association (NPA)
- Northern Ireland Pork & Bacon Forum (NIPBF)
- Pig Veterinary Society (PVS)
- Producer members
- Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)
- RSPCA
- Rural Payments Agency (RPA)

Antimicrobial Usage subgroup

The Antimicrobial Usage subgroup aims to elicit change in the pig industry regarding the responsible use and stewardship of antimicrobials. This subgroup considers information on all aspects of antimicrobial usage by the pig industry and identifies crucial gaps in knowledge, such as optimising efficacy in antimicrobial administration and investigating alternatives to antimicrobials.

The subgroup meets five times per annum, chaired by Dr Grace Webster BVMS MRCVS. The agendas focus on developing and coordinating the delivery of the pig industry roadmap to reduce the usage of antimicrobials in pigs, knowledge exchange and coordination of activity and policy influence regarding antimicrobial use in pigs.

The members of the group are:

- Academia
- Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)
- AHDB and AHDB Pork Sector Council
- Allied Industry Group (AIG)
- Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)
- Assured Food Standards (AFS)/Red Tractor (RT)
- Controlling Antimicrobial Resistance in Scotland (CARS)
- National Office of Animal Health (NOAH)
- National Pig Association (NPA)
- Northern Ireland Pork & Bacon Forum (NIPBF)
- Pig Veterinary Society (PVS)
- Producer members
- Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)
- RUMA
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)

Pig Health and Welfare Council

PHWC aims to be a resource for the pig industry by advising on areas of strategic policy and setting strategies. Key areas of focus are surveillance and disease risk assessment, promotion of welfare and prudent antimicrobial usage through improved disease management. This can only be achieved by a close working relationship with pig keepers, the veterinary profession, government and allied industries. PHWC recognises that its ongoing enterprises must be openly discussed with all interested parties in the pig sector and that results are communicated at all levels, from the farmer to government and CVO when necessary. The main responsibility of PHWC is to enhance the health and welfare of pigs in England.

Pig Health subgroup

The Pig Health subgroup mainly aims to advise PHWC on proposals for effective surveillance of pig health and welfare in England. This is achieved through integrative work across the industry in the same manner as the main PHWC. This group's primary focus is to provide horizon scanning on new pathogens and emerging diseases of importance to the pig industry and on changes in endemic disease trends within the UK. The subgroup then uses this information to formulate strategies of benefit to the UK pig industry and to recommend a course of action in the prevention, reduction or eradication of significant diseases. The provision of a robust, reliable and integrated disease surveillance system forms one of the ongoing long-term strategic aims for this group.

Antimicrobial Usage subgroup

The Antimicrobial Usage subgroup has been charged with reviewing and eliciting change in the pig industry with regard to the responsible use and stewardship of antimicrobials. The group will actively seek out information on all aspects of antimicrobial usage by the pig industry and identify crucial gaps in knowledge. The group recognises the need to safeguard antimicrobials for future generations and reduce the risk of resistance developing. This can only be achieved through an informed approach to antimicrobial usage, based upon evidence in optimising efficacy in antimicrobial administration and investigating alternatives to antimicrobials wherever possible. In addition, it is vital that the whole of the pig industry supports and adopts these measures in good practice. The Antimicrobial Usage subgroup aims to ensure open and informed communications on its findings to the public and stakeholders.

Pig Meat Food Safety subgroup

The Pig Meat Food Safety subgroup aims to be the authoritative group for advice on strategic policy, surveillance, research and management and control of zoonotic hazards in pig meat production. This will be manifested by the development of a roadmap to achieve improvements in pig meat safety. This work requires extensive investigation and evaluation of current knowledge on reducing zoonotic-related food risks and collaboration with government, pig keepers, producers, veterinarians, processors, retailers and allied industries. The inclusion of all these groups is required to ensure that there is a whole chain ownership of the roadmap and shared commitment to its outcomes.

The Welfare subgroup

The Welfare subgroup focuses on all aspects of pig welfare applicable to the UK pig industry. Pig welfare within the British Isles needs to reflect the diverse production methods within the industry, which often presents unique challenges when compared with our European counterparts. The subgroup aims to bring a consensus on the key pig welfare issues to be investigated and the ultimate aims for each issue. This work requires considerable amounts of facilitation between the pig industry (including pig keepers, slaughterhouses and processors), allied industries, vets and paraprofessionals, welfare scientists, consumer organisations and government. The aim is to develop workable strategies and initiatives to address the key issues identified. The subgroup may engage in research in areas where it determines there is a gap in knowledge and utilise this to inform PHWC of any resulting recommendations.

Review of the 20:20 vision for Pig Health and Welfare

Following the restructuring of PHWC in 2014, the approach taken to continue the delivery of the 20:20 vision was to restructure PHWC around strategic themes by establishing four subgroups.

20:20 Pig Health and Welfare for 2020 objectives

1. Support pig producers in delivering their objectives for continual improvements in pig health and pig welfare.
2. Eliminate or control significant enzootic pig diseases locally, regionally and nationally.
3. Eliminate or control significant infections of food safety and public health concern (e.g. *Salmonella*).
4. Develop and promote new knowledge on the assessment of welfare outcomes.
5. Promote the open exchange of information on the disease status for herds and regions.
6. Promote and encourage responsible and appropriate use of antimicrobials.
7. Maintain freedom from notifiable exotic and emerging diseases of pigs.
8. Deliver an integrated approach to improving pig health and welfare with all stakeholders, allied support industries, retailers, foodservice and government.

Pig Health and Welfare for 2030 objectives

The overall objective of PHWC for 2030 is to support the pig industry in achieving an integrated approach to enhance the health and welfare of the pig herd and enable assurance that pork products are safe to eat and produced from pigs whose health and welfare needs have been met.

Objective 1 – Partnership working

1. Lead an alliance of all stakeholders in the pork chain – producers, processors, allied support industries, retailers, foodservice and government – to provide quality animals and products.
2. Design health and welfare strategies with consideration for the impact on the environment and in line with evidence-based best practice to meet consumer demands.
3. Draw up a roadmap to success, enabling target projects to be supported and funded.
4. Work with those responsible for delivering skills strategies to ensure that industry needs are met
5. Support producers and vets in their delivery of integrated farm and/or area-specific programmes to improve pig herd health.
6. Support the industry in becoming self-regulating and take appropriate action to ensure standards are always maintained.

Objective 2 – Maintain and extend our disease surveillance system

1. Encourage all to invest in data systems that are fully coordinated to enable better use of all information being collected.
2. Support the maintenance and further development of an accurate pig register, linked to a detailed mapping system and the electronic medicines book (eMB) to assist disease control programmes and monitor antibiotic usage.
3. Encourage membership of the Significant Diseases Charter to include 92% of pigs for the purposes of information sharing, disease alerts and disease controls. Increase the range of diseases included in the Charter.
4. Encourage the introduction of routine surveillance of wild animal populations of importance to the pig industry, particularly feral pigs, to mitigate disease risk.

Objective 3 – Reduce, control or eliminate endemic and zoonotic diseases, including those with food safety implications

1. Keep an updated register of pig diseases and their impact on health and profitability.
2. Promote programmes to reduce each key disease.
3. Encourage identified behavioural change that impacts disease prevalence.
4. Identify barriers and gaps in knowledge that prevent the successful implementation of disease reduction programmes. Make proposals for the removal of those barriers, including research requirements.
5. Promote the use of improved biosecurity systems at each critical point in the animal/food chain.
6. Promote the further development of individual farm health plans to include food safety challenges.
7. Evidence the need for responsible use of veterinary medicines to maintain the health and welfare of pigs and food safety.

Objective 4 – Examine and collate robust evidence around the welfare provided by UK pig production systems

1. Assist with the collection of data to examine the welfare standards being achieved in the industry.
2. Provide pig owners with advice and guidance to help achieve compliance with changing welfare expectations and welfare codes.
3. Identify and communicate welfare issues that may arise from changes in production methods.
4. Encourage and support the rearing of pigs with intact tails.
5. Identify and promote environments that protect piglet and sow physical and mental wellbeing.

Objective 5 – Encourage the use of data and new technologies

1. Support the development of affordable farm early-warning technologies, such as measures for feed consumption, water consumption and stressors.
2. Encourage the development of tests for rapid and accurate diagnosis, enabling correct use of veterinary medicines and improvements in antimicrobial stewardship.
3. Disseminate information and technologies that contribute to early warning of health and welfare issues.
4. Identify and assess new technologies, such as gene editing, for compliance with PHWC aims.
5. Proactively support the introduction of novel technologies such as precision livestock farming, which contribute to food security, reduce environmental impacts, improve productivity and consequently reduce disease and the subsequent use of veterinary medicines.

Activity 2023–2024

Pig health

Disease surveillance

Great Britain (GB) pig disease surveillance reports and dashboards

The APHA quarterly reports entitled 'disease surveillance and emerging threats' review disease threats and trends for each quarter.

The GB pig disease surveillance dashboard is an online resource developed to share the surveillance information from 2012 onwards derived from submissions to the GB scanning surveillance network. The dashboard is updated monthly.

Separate interactive disease dashboards for GB have also been developed by APHA. The dashboard for *Brachyspira hyodysenteriae* (the cause of swine dysentery) uses the outputs from whole genome sequencing analysis and provides vets and others with information to assist epidemiological investigations and treatment choices. The dashboard for PRRS uses surveillance data extracted from the Veterinary Investigation Diagnosis Analysis (VIDA) database from 2012, which is derived from diagnostic submissions to the GB scanning surveillance network. The dashboard gives vets and others an insight into the clinical signs, pig ages affected, concurrent diagnoses, seasonality and geographic information for cases of PRRS diagnosed each year. The dashboards can be interrogated using a number of filters and are of value, although it must be recognised that the level of disease in specific regions cannot be inferred or compared as submissions to the network are affected by several factors and the disease status of non-submitting herds is not known.

Abattoir surveillance

This is collected as part of the Food Standard Agency's food chain information (FCI) and collection and communication of inspection results (CCIR). CCIR ante-mortem inspections are carried out by the abattoir's official veterinarian (OV), and post-mortem inspections are carried out by specially trained meat hygiene inspectors (MHIs). The ante- and post-mortem data for lesions observed during meat inspection at the abattoir are recorded in the CCIR system. This data is gathered at different points on the line, with each MHI assessing different parts of the carcase and offal. CCIR inspections are required for every animal intended for human consumption, which means they happen daily in every abattoir. CCIR looks at a larger number of ante- and post-mortem conditions. FSA data is not currently used systematically to monitor trends of specific conditions, to detect changes in disease syndromes or to be used for benchmarking. Unless there is a comprehensive feedback system to the producers, the maximum benefits will not be achieved.

When the electronic Animal Movement Licensing system (eAML2) was launched, it included a service to match CCIR data from FSA to movements and email CCIR reports to each producer. This service ceased due to flooding of the FSA computer in York. AHDB has continued to work with FSA and their IT supplier to restore the flow of CCIR data to producers. The intention is that producers will be able to access their data through their Pig Hub account. There have been issues with accuracy, and this must be improved as a priority to provide confidence in the data. Test data has begun to flow from some abattoirs, but the system is not fully operational. Further testing is currently underway, but there is currently no date set for when this system will go live.

Archive of serum and tonsil samples

Eight hundred blood and tonsil samples from at least 550 farms were collected from slaughter pigs in early 2024 to add to the archive from 2019. The archive can be tested as required to provide national prevalence data for endemic or emerging disease threats. APHA will store the archive for future testing over another five-year period. Testing the previous archive to provide national PRRSV-1 and porcine circovirus 3 prevalence data for the slaughter pig population was undertaken to provide baseline levels and inform possible future initiatives or control through the AHWP.

Syndromic surveillance

The subgroup has listened to presentations on syndromic surveillance in both Scotland and Wales. While it is undoubtedly of benefit, there are numerous logistical difficulties to be overcome in implementing a useful programme.

Disease control

Priority diseases

The pig industry has long recognised the relevance of endemic disease, both to the productivity and economic bottom line and to the welfare of the animals in its care. In the past, the Pig Health subgroup proposed a priority list of endemic diseases which have economic and welfare implications and for which there is a need to reduce the prevalence or, where appropriate, eliminate them. The list agreed upon by the Pig Health subgroup and the AHWP included PRRS, swine influenza, *Streptococcus suis*, swine dysentery and salmonellosis, with the initial focus on PRRS. The list is currently under review.

Exclusion testing for notifiable disease

Exclusion testing involves samples being sent for testing where a disease such as ASF is a possibility but is not suspected, avoiding the premises going under formal disease restrictions. The Pig Health subgroup continues to support the concept of testing for exclusion, particularly for swine fevers.

Significant Diseases Charter

One of the constraints to sharing information quickly in the event of a disease outbreak relates to the confidentiality and legality of releasing information about the suspect or infected premises. This problem of confidentially is partially overcome by the Significant Diseases Charter, which is an important component of the contingency plans for PED. It is an email alert system to provide producers and their vets with timely alerts in the event of an outbreak of swine dysentery or PED. Charter members are alerted by email, which enables them to take precautions to minimise the spread of infection. Membership of the Charter has been a condition of RT membership since November 2021. Currently, the Charter only covers swine dysentery and PED, but there is a provision to extend the scope to include other diseases following consultation with the industry.

The Pig Health subgroup has reviewed discrepancies between the number of Charter notifications of swine dysentery and the number of diagnoses of swine dysentery established through the GB scanning surveillance network. This review found potential reasons for discrepancies to be holdings with repeat diagnoses not re-declaring a positive status to the Charter and/or holdings which are not RT members (e.g. small-scale holdings) not being members of/ declaring to the Charter. Work is now ongoing to examine these factors in more detail in order to impact them.

Border controls

While ASF remains a major concern for the pig sector, the emergence of other notifiable diseases in Europe is also of concern. Although these diseases have not resulted in outbreaks in pigs in the UK, there is concern around increased trade, both legal and illegal, globalisation and poor biosecurity leading to these outbreaks. The occurrence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in ruminants in the USA and recently in a sheep in the UK is a stark reminder of the rapidity of evolution of some viruses.

The Pig Health subgroup remains concerned that the controls to prevent the introduction of the ASF virus via porcine products are very limited. This is unlike many other countries free of ASF, where strict border controls, biosecurity, publicity and enforcement are in place. The risk of entry of ASF virus in porcine products imported from restricted zones in EU-affected countries, including from illegal imports, remains a major risk. The importation of pork or pork products from Asia and other non-EU countries into GB continues to be illegal for travellers, but there remain major concerns about the illegal importation of these products. Although the UK is no longer part of the EU, there were no immediate changes to the rules governing passenger imports from the EU into the UK. However, in September 2022, new restrictions were introduced, limiting the personal importation of unpackaged pork products from the EU to a maximum of 2 kg. Given that personal imports of pork products may pose notable risk for the introduction of ASF, we welcomed the tightening in 2024 of the ASF safeguard measures on personal imports of pork and pork products from the EU, first introduced in 2022. This removed the exemption allowing personal imports of commercially produced products to 2 kg. Further, travellers are strongly advised to avoid bringing, buying, ordering on the internet or requesting any pork products – for example, fresh or frozen meat, dried or cured meats, sausages, salamis, or pâté – to the UK from affected parts of Europe . We also welcome the complete ban on meat and dairy products from Germany in light of the recent foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak1.

Continued substantial seizures of illegally imported pork and pork products following the tightening of safeguarding measures are concerning. There are reports of pork products originating from the EU and other ASF-affected countries being smuggled through ports and airports into GB via passenger luggage. This, along with movements through other ports and airports, suggests that considerable quantities of illegal pork and pork products could be entering GB each day from regions affected by ASF as part of organised criminal undertakings may be posing a substantial risk to the UK pig herd

The subgroup is concerned over the inland border facility at Sevington, Kent. Originally, an additional facility was planned for Dover, but this has since been cancelled. The Sevington site was designed primarily to manage traffic from the Channel Tunnel, which accounts for less than 20% of imports entering Kent. Its location – 22 miles inland from Dover – raises biosecurity concerns, as it increases the risk of contamination from vehicles transporting goods across this distance. The subgroup also had concerns about the design of the facilities being unsuitable to prevent cross-contamination. There are also worries about the ease with which imports may be able to bypass inspection. These concerns have been raised with the CVOs by the subgroup members.

*As of April 2025, the updates have undergone modifications or adjustments.

Preparedness for an exotic disease outbreak

The subgroup has supported AHDB and NPA in their organisation of industry meetings to develop contingency plans for an ASF outbreak in the UK, which is also relevant to other notifiable diseases such as FMD. There has been farmer-focused meetings raising awareness of the clinical signs of ASF and the implications of an outbreak on both affected farms (e.g. culling, cleaning and disinfecting)

Pigs showing clinical signs of ASF: red or dark skin on ears, snout and leg

and non-affected farms (e.g. enhanced biosecurity, slaughter delays, price reductions due to loss of export trade). There have also been meetings with meat chain representatives looking at, for example, pre-designation of abattoirs, disposal of carcases and effects on trade.

Lessons are being learnt from the current bluetongue and HPAI outbreaks.

Disease situation

African swine fever (ASF)

Defra continues to publish qualitative risk assessments concerning the risks to the UK from ASF, issued separately for the European continent and for Asia (China and in the Far East).

ASF continues to spread worldwide and has reached multiple countries across Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and the Pacific, with outbreaks affecting both domestic and wild pigs.

African swine fever remains prevalent among wild boar across much of Eastern Europe, and cases also continue sporadically in domestic pigs in several countries in Europe. Long geographical ‘jumps’ of ASF persisted in Europe, most notably in Germany and to Sweden, often being detected first in wild boar. The short-distance transmission of ASF appears to depend largely on the wild boar population density and their interaction with low-biosecurity pig production systems. Long-distance transmission of the virus is likely to be caused by human movement of potentially infected pork products, vehicles or equipment.

Within Europe, the continuing outbreak in Piedmont, Italy, and the jump to Hesse, Germany, are of concern as both regions neighbour areas with high pig populations.

On the positive side, the eradication of ASF in Sweden shows that with concerted, quick action ASF can be eliminated, which is a lesson we can learn from.

Feral pigs and boar

The AHDB-led Feral Wild Boar Working Group continues to meet twice a year and provides a platform for local landowners, industry bodies and government to collaborate. The group was established with a focus on the largest known population of feral wild boar in the Forest of Dean, with a view to extending this approach and applying any lessons identified to other emerging populations in England. The group includes representatives from Defra, Welsh Government and Scottish Government and their delivery agencies so that activities in each region can help inform management and policy decisions across GB.

The group has facilitated valuable intelligence sharing and knowledge exchange across GB, building on the progress made managing the feral wild boar population in the Forest of Dean. The Forest of Dean has a target number of feral pigs of 400 breeding animals on Forestry England-managed land in the area. Although numbers are currently higher, the population has significantly decreased since 2018 and continues to do so in response to the management actions of Forestry England. Further information on Forestry England’s management approach and population surveys of feral wild boar in the Forest of Dean can be found on Forestry England's website.

Outside of the Forestry England-managed land in the Forest of Dean, there are now numerous reports of feral pigs being frequently found on farmland around the forest and even across the River Wye, attracted by fodder crops such as maize. This is a pattern also reported in Europe. Forestry England is collaborating with local landowners and Natural Resources Wales to help deal with these incursions. The rangers also continue to work with APHA and the Pirbright Institute to sample dead boar for ASF. This sampling was extended to Scotland in late 2024 using Forestry and Land Scotland rangers.

Outside of the Forest of Dean, there are pockets of feral pigs and boar across the UK, but, worryingly, illegal releases have been reported in Scotland and the West Country.

Porcine epidemic diarrhoea (PED)

PED remains notifiable in England and Scotland and suspicion of disease, or confirmation of infection, must be reported. There have only been two suspected cases of PED, both in England, where PED was ruled out, since the disease was made notifiable in 2015. The last diagnosis recorded in England in VIDA was in 2002. The last recorded case of transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE) in Great Britain was in 1999. Enhanced surveillance for PED virus continues, and diagnostic submissions from non-suspect cases of diarrhoea in pigs submitted to APHA are routinely tested by PCR for PEDv, TGE virus (TGEV) and porcine delta coronavirus (PDCoV) on a weekly basis. Neither PEDv nor TGEV has been detected in diagnostic submissions tested between June 2013 and August 2025. No PDCoV has been detected from diagnostic submissions since PDCoV was added to this enhanced surveillance in February 2023. A small number were from Wales, with the remainder from England. Samples taken in Scotland are sent to Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) for testing.

Seneca valley virus (SVV)

There have been no further clinical cases of SVV in 2023–24.

Swine dysentery

In 2024, there were 60 diagnoses recorded in VIDA from diagnostic submissions to the GB scanning surveillance network of swine dysentery in GB compared with 49 in 2023 and 31 in 2022. It should be noted that VIDA records capture diagnoses of swine dysentery, not detections of *B. hyodysenteriae* made from submissions monitoring herd status without associated clinical signs. Each year, several VIDA diagnoses were from submissions where the same CPH number was provided. Some cases have involved relatively mild diarrhoea, and the muco-haemorrhagic diarrhoea usually associated with swine dysentery is not always seen. Pig producers are encouraged to sign up for the Charter, which helps producers by sharing information about new swine dysentery outbreaks. When *B. hyodysenteriae* isolates are provided from either diagnostic or monitoring submissions, antimicrobial sensitivity testing and whole genome sequencing are carried out by APHA. This identified a variety of different sequence types (STs) in 2023 and 2024. ST 341 was the most frequently detected in 2024.

The number of diagnoses established for swine dysentery reiterates the need for effective biosecurity, especially haulage and lorry washing. The Muck Free Truck campaign is to be revisited with an aim of helping to reduce further spread.

Porcine reproductive respiratory syndrome (PRRS)

PRRS due to PRRS virus type 1 (PRRSV-1) remains an important viral infection in UK pigs, although the GB scanning surveillance diagnostic rate for PRRS has shown a downward trend since the first quarter of 2023. Diagnoses have been confirmed in vaccinated herds as well as unvaccinated ones.

Globally, PRRSV-2 tends to cause more severe disease than PRRSV-1. However, more virulent strains of PRRSV-1 have been described in other parts of Europe outside Great Britain. For example, subtype 3 occurs in Eastern Europe and the Rosalia strain occurs in Spain. No PRRSV-2 has been detected in the British pig herd to date.

In 2021, detection of PRRSV (1 or 2) became reportable in GB. This means that a test result which indicates that an animal or carcase is, or is reasonably suspected to be, infected with PRRSV-2 must be reported to APHA as soon as possible. For PRRSV-1, reporting of test results which indicate infection is monthly.

PRRS is the priority for disease control in the pig component of the AHWP, alongside a focus on biosecurity improvements to control endemic pig diseases and prevent the introduction of exotic disease threats. The 'Get funding to improve animal health and welfare' service was launched under the AHWP in June 2024, with the addition of the endemic disease follow-up. The follow-up provides funding for genetic sequencing for PRRS-positive farms and formal biosecurity assessments. The Pig Health subgroup is updated on issues and progress on a regular basis. The subgroup has commented on the service implementation and has fed back on concerns around the PRRS testing regime, multispecies and multisite farms and the exclusion of units of less than 50 pigs.

The subgroup is encouraged by the renewed focus on biosecurity in the expanded support on offer.

Disease due to *Escherichia coli*

There was an increase in the annual GB scanning surveillance network diagnostic rate of disease due to *E. coli* (which includes enteric colibacillosis and oedema disease) from 2022 to 2024. Factors involved may include dietary changes, attempts to reduce antimicrobial use, the removal of zinc oxide from post-weaning pig diets, changes in antimicrobial susceptibility and more. The diagnostic trend will be kept under review. The subgroup aims to support vets and producers through these potential challenges over the next reporting period.

Welfare

Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

There has been less uptake from pig farmers in AHWP schemes, including previous rounds of equipment and technology grants and the 'Get funding 'service, due to issues around animal ownership in integrated operations. The iterative nature of the 'Get funding' service has meant that businesses with multiple sites have been unable to access grants across all sites. Now that the multiple species and multiple herds and flocks update have been rolled out, it is hoped that more producers will engage and apply for the 'Get funding' service to make positive changes on farm.

Euthanasia of piglets

This remains under discussion. The non-penetrating captive bolt method of euthanising piglets is not 100% successful and yet we are without clear guidance as to what a suitable and legal secondary measure might be. The number of devices present on farm is increasing, but concerns remain overuse on very small piglets as there is potential for suffering either from a delay in implementing emergency euthanasia or devices failing to achieve a fatal stun. The group, headed by the Pig Veterinary Society (PVS), remains in discussion with APHA and producers and it is to be hoped that this matter can be resolved as rapidly as possible.

Freedom around farrowing and lactation

The Buildings Forum has taken the lead in looking at the various systems and options for producers wishing to move away from traditional farrowing accommodation towards free farrowing. It is anticipated that new farrowing accommodation is unlikely to be built with traditional crates. Producers have been wary of investing in free farrowing accommodation as, to date, there has been no 'blueprint' or guidance for producers wishing to take this step. It is recognised that the financial inputs needed and the planning constraints around building or converting farrowing accommodation are significant; without clear guidance, producers are going to be reluctant to invest with no assurance that the systems they put in place are appropriate and with no clear specifications.

NPA produced a review of flexible farrowing systems in November of 2024 which has increased the momentum on discussions around free farrowing.

Red Tractor, in close collaboration with producers, welfare scientists, PVS and AHDB Buildings Forum, has facilitated discussions to identify the requirements for indoor free farrowing accommodation. This has taken into account work that has been done within Europe; the positive physiological and behavioural benefits to the sows; protecting piglets; and ensuring the safety of staff working in these systems.
An evidence-based approach, backed by science, has been taken and significant progress has been made with a view to producing reliable, pragmatic and financially viable guidance to producers looking to go down this route.

Industry training

The AHDB Pig Handling Training, compulsory for all who work with pigs on farms, has been completed by nearly 9,000 people since its launch. The training has been updated and improved to include handling pigs outdoors and in straw yards. Additional funding has been made available through AHDB for further training modules.

Welfare at slaughter

CO2 stunning at slaughter is an area of concern. Members of the group, including AHDB, are part of working groups to look at alternatives. An international group investigating alternatives to CO2 meet monthly. Its membership encompasses the interdisciplinary approach that is needed to include the engineering, biological, welfare and veterinary aspect of this important issue.

There is also a group of the four main domestic processors and AHDB to investigate and discuss best practice around optimising pig handling from unloading to slaughter.

We remain committed to reviewing and, where supported by robust evidence and scientific research, implementing improvements to animal welfare at the time of slaughter.

Antimicrobial usage

eMB Pigs

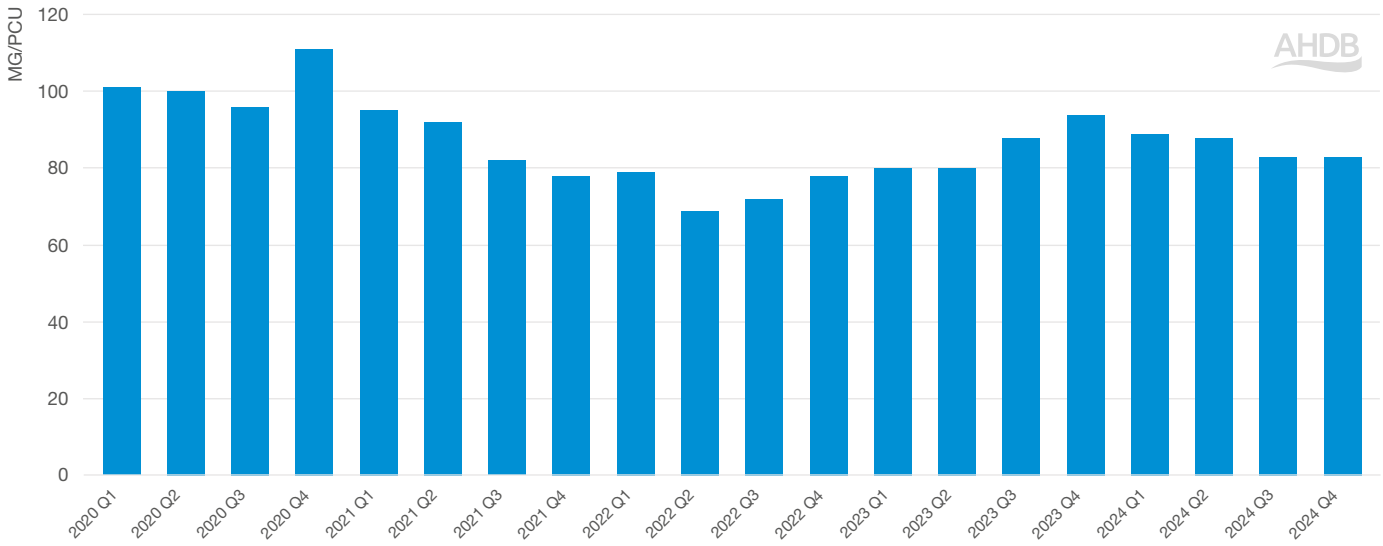
The Antimicrobial Usage subgroup continues to review and analyse the data gathered from 96% of the pigs produced in the UK (Figure 5). Ten years of antibiotic use data have now been collected, and the majority of this data is collected in a timely fashion, with more than 90% of submissions received within six weeks of the period end. Having achieved the Target Task Force (TTF) 2 target in 2022, the last two years have seen a resurgence of health issues, and antibiotic usage increased by 18% in 2023.

The most significant increases have occurred in three classes of antibiotics – pleuromutilins, lacosamides and aminoglycosides – reflecting the underlying disease issues reported by vets of swine dysentery, swine influenza (as part of respiratory disease complex) and *E. coli*-associated post-weaning diarrhoea and oedema disease. VIDA data from submissions to the GB scanning surveillance network showed an annual increase in the diagnostic rate of disease due to *E. coli* (which includes enteric colibacillosis and oedema disease) from 2022 to 2024. This data also reflects the importance of diseases including swine dysentery (due to *Brachyspira hyodysenteriae*), porcine spirochaetosis (due to *Brachyspira pilisicoli*) and PRRS.

Whole genome sequencing and minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) testing by broth microdilution is undertaken on a representative *B. hyodysenteriae* isolate from a submission from each premises (where successfully isolated and provided to APHA) under funding from APHA's pig disease scanning surveillance project. Seventeen of the 36 (47%) isolates sequenced in 2024 were of an ST not previously identified in GB. Just four isolates showed clinical resistance to tiamulin, three of which were from the same holding. In this way, clinical resistance to licensed antimicrobials did not appear to be a main factor behind the upward trend in the number of swine dysentery diagnoses established through the GB scanning surveillance network since 2021.

An alternative treatment for swine dysentery that avoids the use of an antibiotic is available under a Special Import Certificate (SIC), but difficulties in securing SICs have hindered the transition away from antibiotics in some cases.

Vaccine supply issues have also been cited as a contributory factor to increases in antibiotic use, particularly where no alternative product is available



Source: eMB, AHDB

Figure 5. Quarterly antibiotic use in mg/PCU

or where moving to an alternative live vaccine carries some risk. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) has established a working group with stakeholders to look for solutions to this, including incentives to establish UK production facilities.

Persistently high user (PHU)

Persistently high users are defined as the top 5% of antibiotic users in each of the main categories of production recorded by eMB, except boar studs and gilt units. PHU farms disproportionately belonged to the breeder to weaner and nursery categories. Analysis of the data around PHUs revealed that only 35 units remained in the top 5% of antibiotic users for eight quarters or more. Possible reasons for this are periods of higher use being associated with health breakdowns and/or disease eradication programmes. The reason for breeder–finishers tending to remain longer as a PHU than other categories could be due to hesitancy to depopulate units or difficulties in finding alternative pig places to complete a partial depopulation.

Withdrawal of marketing authorisations for zinc oxide products

The last remaining stock of zinc oxide expired in summer 2024 and there has been considerable uptake of alternative products, such as organic acids, pre- and pro-biotics. An increase in antibiotic use in the post-weaning period was expected, in line with reports from other European countries, such as Denmark when they stopped therapeutic use of zinc oxide.

The withdrawal of the marketing authorisations was due to concerns about the environmental impact of zinc as determined by modelling (IDMM – Intermediate Dynamic Model for Metals). The subgroup contributed to a VMD-sponsored project to validate the model, address some of the uncertainties, refine the risk characterisation and provide further data to support the IDMM. Soil and surface water samples were taken from a site in Moray in Scotland and one in Lincolnshire. The results of the project have now been published and found that the regional Eastern scenario reflected the site-specific data, and the model predictions remained largely unchanged.

The regional Scottish scenario is less comparable to the site-specific data, particularly regarding soil clay content and ph. Therefore, the scenario appears less susceptible to leaching of zinc from the soil to the local surface waters. Furthermore, the site-specific surface water had a higher dissolved organic carbon (DOC) and calcium concentration, with the result that the predicted no-effect concentration (PNEC) for zinc was increased, indicating a lower sensitivity. Consequently, for both soil and surface water, the calculated risk characterisation ratios (RQs) are lower (sediment was not sampled); however, the conclusions that can be drawn are limited by the low number of sites (i.e. one) tested.

In comparison with IDMM calculations, for the Scottish scenario, measured concentrations of zinc in the soils were within a factor of (approximately) two of the predicted values (for the adjusted input parameters). The assumptions made about historic inputs of zinc in animal manures are thought to be a key source of uncertainty in this assessment. However, it is difficult to account for this in the modelling as this information is not available (and hence a conservative approach to this aspect is taken).

VMD considers this additional data to be useful, but due to the limited number of sites sampled and the other uncertainties (e.g. historic loading of zinc onto soil, as well as zinc from other sources) which remain, it is difficult to make any more robust conclusions.

A rapid evidence assessment of practices to reduce post-weaning diarrhoea in pigs carried out in 2022 was published in 2023 and members of the group have ensured that this has been circulated to the stakeholders that they represent.

RUMA Targets Task Force 2 (TTF2) progress

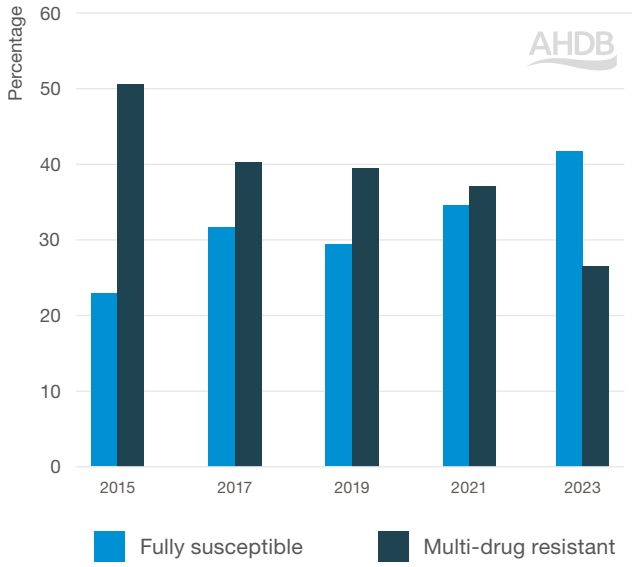
TTF2 was completed at the end of 2024 and will report in the autumn of 2025 once all of the species' sectors have collated and verified their data. It is not expected that the pig sector will meet the target usage reduction of 30% set, but it will have achieved a further 18% reduction once our data is confirmed. Use of the critically important antibiotics (CIAs), which were already very low, have fallen by a further 80% through TTF2. There has been no use of colistin throughout this period.

Among the non-numerical targets was an aim to encourage the use of targeted water medication rather than antibiotics in feed. In-feed delivery has notably reduced from 87% in 2016 to 50% in 2024, with a concurrent increase in water-soluble antibiotics from 12% to 45%.

Small grants have been available through the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway that can help producers to improve water quality and infrastructure on farms to allow these more targeted treatments to be used more often in preference to in-feed medicines.

The target to monitor current antimicrobial resistance data and aim for a reduction on the 2020 baselines has also been successful (Figure 6, overleaf). Antibiotic resistance continues to be monitored by the VMD and reported annually in the VARSS report. PHWC works with the VMD if concerns arise from this to ensure any action is evidence based. Improvements in the proportion of fully susceptible *E. coli* have risen in pigs from the samples collected in healthy pigs at the abattoir. Clinical surveillance continues and helps the PHWC to identify emerging issues, although the group is mindful that it is not representative data.

Work has begun on development of TTF3 Pig Targets, which will run from 2025 to 2028.



Source: VMD, VARSS Report 2023

Figure 6. Percentage fully susceptible and multi-drug-resistant *E. coli* isolated from healthy pigs at slaughter (n=170 in 2023)

Revision of the medicated feed and Veterinary Medicines Regulations

In previous biennial reports, we highlighted the concerns of the group regarding the EU legislation that will form the basis for the new regulations. These included the ban on prophylaxis and group medication in feed and limiting the duration of a prescription to five days. The revised Veterinary Medicines Regulations were finally published in May 2024, with a six-month lead-in time to full implementation.

Following the consultation, several changes were made to the proposed draft, including the scope to use group prophylaxis in "exceptional circumstances where the risk of an infection or an infectious disease is very high and where the consequences of not prescribing the product are likely to be severe". Any such use must be accompanied by a management review to avoid this becoming habitual, ongoing treatment. This recognises the professional obligations of the veterinary surgeon that requires them to ensure the health and welfare of the animals under their care, as well as the legal obligations of the farmer to protect their animals from pain suffering and disease.

Prescriptions for medicated feed are now only valid from the day of signing for five days, creating logistical challenges for feed mills and veterinary practices to ensure that the expiry of the script aligns with the required time for a medicated feed manufacturing run and delivery. Obtaining clarity on the interpretation of the regulation remains an ongoing process.

Biosecurity

This important area is often a point of vulnerability on farms, particularly associated with transport, and can lead to increased use of antibiotics when deficiencies allow entry or circulation of infections within the unit. Professor Ilias Chantziaras presented evidence from the Biocheck.UGent™ online assessment tool, demonstrating that improved biosecurity can lead to reductions in antibiotic usage of up to 50% and enhanced production performance. These benefits are further amplified when the assessment process is supported by coaching from trained vets using the ADKAR model (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement), which has been shown to deliver the most effective and sustainable outcomes.

It is recognised that internal biosecurity changes are usually easier and cheaper to implement, but greater benefits may be associated with improvements in fencing, transportation and cleaning and disinfection.

National action plan for AMR

In May 2024, the Government published the 2024–2029 national action plan. It has nine strategic outcomes organised under four themes. Action is be taken across all sectors (human health, animal health, agriculture and the environment). The public consultation completed in January 2023 concluded that inappropriate use in humans and agricultural antibiotic use were considered the top two drivers of AMR and that agriculture and the environment were the sectors where more action is needed.

The nine strategic outcomes are on page 25.
The full report can be found at **gov.uk/government/publications/uk-5-year-action-plan-for-antimicrobial-resistance-2024-to-2029**

Some of these are more relevant to the pig sector than others. For example, the theme "changing behaviour" could be particularly pertinent given that the next phases of antibiotic use reduction may become more difficult as more readily achievable areas for improvement have already been realised.

It is anticipated that the funding available for research into AMR, new vaccines and diagnostics will be confirmed once the spending review has been completed. Some of the examples of deliverables in this area would include VMD funding research to:

- Understand how vets and farmers are implementing the new Veterinary Medicines Regulations
- Identify the most successful methods, as well as the barriers to vets promoting, and farmers implementing, activities and interventions aimed at reducing routine and group prophylactic use

VMD has also committed to work around surveillance of UK borders, given unusual resistance, sometimes in individual pigs and the challenge this can present for the industry. VMD works closely with trade and border controls, and this is a live theme, particularly within its surveillance, policy and communications teams.

Reducing the need for, and unintentional exposure to, antimicrobials

1. Infection prevention and management
   - Informed interventions
   - The built environment
   - Waste minimisation and effective waste management
2. Public engagement and education
   - Public awareness and campaigns
   - Use of educational settings
   - Engagement guide
3. Strengthened surveillance
   - Optimising surveillance and response
   - Surveillance to inform interventions

Optimising the use of antimicrobials

4. Antimicrobial stewardship and disposal
   - Clinical decision support
   - Appropriate prescribing and disposal
   - Behavioural interventions
5. AMR workshops
   - Health and social care training
   - Health and social care workforce
   - Health and social care governance
   - Veterinary workforce knowledge and skills
   - Systems to support animal health

Confronting AMR: The UK's second 5-year national action plan (2024 to 2029)

Investing in innovation, supply and access

6. Innovation and influence
   - AMR solutions
   - Subscription models
   - Overcoming market barriers
   - Improvement and adaption
7. Using information for action
   - Evidence generation and use
   - Research networks
8. Health disparities and health inequalities
   - Data on health inequalities
   - Health inequalities toolkit
   - Health inequalities interventions

Being a good global partner

9. AMR diplomacy
   - Prevention and preparedness
   - Access and stewardship
   - Antimicrobial use in farming
   - Standard for manufacturing and waste management
   - Advocacy and engagement

As part of the deliverables to optimise the use of antimicrobials, VMD will encourage the move away from in-feed antibiotic medication, wherever possible, towards more targeted in-water administration.

Food safety

The Food Safety subgroup seeks out advancements to monitor the prevalence of known food safety risks in the pork meat chain and to share new and emerging information from research which would benefit the producer or the processor in further controlling risks.

In 2023–24, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) reported no major outbreaks of food poisoning incidents linked to pork products. UKHSA is planning a project assessing the genetic relatedness of *Yersinia*. This project will involve analysis from pork and pork products. In the initial surveillance work of 2013, *Yersinia* levels were 33% in tonsil and 1.9% on carcase. At these levels, it was not considered a significant risk.

The Food Safety subgroup also works closely with FSA, with the aim of providing actions on farm that will reduce the risk to the consumer from any pork product. The findings at meat inspection are published by FSA and this is monitored by the subgroup for changes in trends. There have been no significant changes in the conditions recognised during meat inspection that might create a food safety risk.

PHWC supported an application to the Food Safety Research Network, coordinated by the Quadram Institute Network, for funding three projects aimed at enhancing food safety in the pork sector. This includes research into the prevalence of *Clostridioides difficile* on UK pig farms and its potential food safety risks. Studies have also explored how altering pig batch mixing affects the prevalence of hepatitis E, providing insights into the virus's epidemiology. Additionally, the serum and tonsil biobank is being updated with samples from ongoing projects, further strengthening its value for future surveillance and research.

In parallel, engagement with the industry is underway to explore the benefits of an effective food chain information (FCI) cycle and to support the development of a virtual abattoir, aimed at improving transparency and supporting the training of vets and abattoir operatives.

Salmonella

There have been no major outbreaks of human salmonellosis associated with pigs, pork or pork products during this reporting period. There is no funding currently available to carry out ongoing surveillance for the prevalence of *Salmonella* on farm or in animals presented for slaughter. *Salmonella* has many subtypes, of which only a few are zoonotic. It is these, mainly monophasic types, that must be controlled. We are grateful to VMD for agreeing to test samples collected on farms for the presence of Salmonella and their serotypes. From data collected by VMD in 2023, circa 34% of units were positive, which remains similar to the levels reported previously. *Salmonella* remains the highest cause of food poisoning incidents linked to pig meat consumption in humans.

The introduction of a vaccine against certain *Salmonella* serovars has provided the industry with another control measure. Research has indicated that it will be effective particularly if used at the top of the pig pyramid and in conjunction with good biosecurity controls. *Salmonella*, like other bacteria, has many different serotypes, some of which have less public health significance than others. In a European cost-benefit analysis, the use of acidified foods was identified as the most favourable intervention on farm, but in trials in the UK with the feed industry and farmers, the results were disappointing, and this option has not been promoted.

The EU BIOPIGEE project (which APHA was a partner in) identified that the risk of *Salmonella* contamination could be reduced by maintaining pigs in their rearing batches during transport and lairage, reducing the time pigs spend in the lairage, not misting with water but using a dilute disinfectant solution and maintaining the optimum operating temperature of the scald tank through the day. These actions have been shared with the industry.

QMS has continued to use a meat juice ELISA test to monitor the prevalence of *Salmonella* in pigs at the abattoir and has a programme to identify those with the highest prevalence and provide advice and support in changing operations to reduce *Salmonella* levels at these premises. FGS is monitoring this programme and assessing its effectiveness.

Hepatitis E

As trade deals are developed, the UK pig herd may be asked to demonstrate prevalence data for hepatitis E virus. The last surveillance data was gathered in 2013, and no further surveillance is planned. FSA has reported that the risk of hepatitis E infection in humans from properly cooked pork meat and products is very low. However, the industry continues to be aware that monitoring is important to ensure that prevalence levels are not increasing.

Livestock-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (LA-MRSA)

First identified in UK pigs in 2014, LA-MRSA has since been detected through routine APHA surveillance in 2017, 2020, 2022 and 2023. Although LA-MRSA rarely causes clinical disease in pigs, they can act as asymptomatic carriers. Transmission to humans – particularly those in close contact with pigs, such as farm workers and vets – has been documented. In most cases, human carriage is transient, with individuals testing negative after removal from the pig environment. However, in some instances, the duration of carriage may be sufficient to allow onward transmission into the wider community, particularly to individuals with underlying health conditions.

PHWC continues to monitor the situation and advise those who work closely with pigs on how to protect themselves and those with whom they come into contact. There has been a slight increase in reported cases of LA-MRSA in humans over the past two years. However, these cases cannot be directly attributed to the pig industry, as LA-MRSA can also be acquired through hospital exposure or within the community. That said, close contact with livestock remains a recognised risk factor for colonisation, particularly among individuals working in agricultural settings.

VMD is undertaking a literature review to assist in understanding and controlling the risks associated with LA-MRSA.

Clostridioides difficile

In humans, this bacterium infects the bowel, causing diarrhoea. It is usually acquired after taking broad-spectrum antibiotics and in a hospital or care situation. In a project conducted by the University of Hertfordshire*, *C. difficile* was found in the faeces of piglets under one week old and in the environment. Levels in adult pigs and fatteners were extremely low. Work is continuing to understand more about the significance of its presence, prevalence and distribution and to actively monitor changing trends.

**Clostridioides difficile* in UK pigs and risks to the food chain (Phase 2), University of Hertfordshire, 2023–2027. Principal investigators: Dr. S. Goh and Dr. S. Baines.

Trichinella

There have been no positive samples for *Trichinella* in England in the two-year period. The testing regime for pigs at risk has been agreed and implemented.

Milestones for 2025–2026

As well as general milestones for PHWC, each of the subgroups sets its own milestones, which reflect known challenges in the four critical areas. However, subgroups are reactive to unseen issues that arise and where the industry needs to work together to deliver an outcome. The subgroups present their work to PHWC to ensure that all members of the Council have the opportunity to contribute and their views be taken into account. The Council is held to account for its support both for and to the industry.

In addition to the milestones outlined below, the longer-term priority of PHWC is set out in the objectives listed in the Review of the 20:20 vision for Pig Health and Welfare section.

PHWC

1. Maintain a council that attracts representation from across the pig and pork meat chain, associated industries and relevant government departments and devolved administrations.
2. Identify key pig health challenges for 2025–2026 and outline effective mitigation or elimination strategies.
3. Support producers to adopt mitigation or elimination strategies where applicable and provide advice on implementation.
4. Cooperate with research groups and funding organisations to influence the direction of research so that academia may provide useful outputs which meet the needs of producers and enable improvements in pig health or welfare.

Pig Health subgroup

1. Give advice and support to help maintain and develop up-to-date disease-control measures to minimise the risk of introducing exotic pathogens or pathogen strains into the country and onto farms. Help to ensure that the pig industry is able to take appropriate action against new, emerging, exotic notifiable and endemic diseases.
2. Provide support and coordination to the activities to improve and develop a comprehensive and inclusive surveillance system for the pig industry which is fit for purpose and uses existing and new data sources. The surveillance system should be capable of detecting current and emerging threats to pig health and welfare, as well as providing baseline information against which progress can be monitored.
3. Continue to act as an advisory body to the AHWP in relation to the pig industry components, monitor the outcomes being achieved by the PRRS control project and implement the mapping and biosecurity programme.
4. Encourage measures to prevent the introduction and spread of infectious diseases onto farms by advising on and supporting enhanced biosecurity within the whole farm to fork chain.

Welfare subgroup

The group is constantly reviewing areas of concern, including those detailed in the milestones. We continue to review research and opinion from Europe and the rest of the world on welfare issues so that we can better understand and improve the welfare of our domestic herd.

Health and welfare are inextricably linked, and so implications for improved welfare associated with addressing endemic disease, as well as identifying new threats, will be in full association with the Surveillance subgroup and the AHWP.

Collaboration with Farm Assurance, APHA and Defra will be maintained and strengthened where possible so that on-farm welfare remains at the forefront of ongoing discussions, especially in the areas around compliance and implementation of the Code, farrowing systems, euthanasia and tail damage.

1. Work across the industry to reduce tail damage on farm and strive to support producers to increase the number of pigs raised with intact tails without adversely affecting the welfare of those pigs.
2. Focus on welfare proximate to, before and during slaughter and the methods used in UK abattoirs.
3. Review current practice with respect to pig medicine teaching and euthanasia training at UK vet schools, for newly graduated vets and mixed-practice vets with little pig experience. Ensure the latest information on best practice is provided to producers, including non-assured farms and smallholders, in collaboration with NPA and BPA.
4. Review the current welfare status of sows and piglets at the time of farrowing and during lactation; support the collection of evidence relevant to the various systems available; and evaluate the welfare of the sow and piglet, as well as the safety of those working in the farrowing area.

Antimicrobial subgroup

1. Support initiatives and guide knowledge transfer for vets and producers, aiming for improved antimicrobial stewardship in pigs. This will include:
   - Engaging with producers that are consistently using the highest levels of antibiotics through diagnostics and advice
   - Encouraging behavioural change in vets and farmers to reduce antimicrobial usage in pigs while maintaining high health and welfare in the national herd
   - Identifying best-practice examples of reducing antimicrobial use in commercial pig herds
2. This will be with a focus on bio-exclusion and biocontainment, particularly with regard to swine dysentery.
3. Support RUMA in increasing awareness of the importance of ensuring the responsible use of antimicrobials in pigs. This will also include advising the new RUMA Targets Task Force as it develops targets for the period from 2025 to 2028. PHWC will work to develop a proposal for TTF3 and support the RUMA Targets Task Force as it develops objectives for further antibiotic usage reduction in pigs and ongoing refinement of the use of these medicines. The group will continue to monitor progress against these targets, facilitate the implementation of responsible use of antibiotics across the industry, encourage the development and use of rapid pen-side testing and develop an understanding of the environmental impact of AMR.
4. Assess the impact of the rapid reduction in antibiotic use on the health and welfare of the UK pig herd using a range of data sources, including CCIR, Agrosoft, eMB Pigs and VIDA, to ensure that health and welfare are not being negatively affected.

Pig Meat Food Safety subgroup

The Food Safety subgroup meets three times a year to review the current situation in relation to pig meat and foodborne disease outbreaks, its milestones being to:

1. Seek out advancements in control and reduction strategies which can be applied on farm and at abattoirs to reduce the risk to the industry of a foodborne disease outbreak related to micro-organisms from pigs, pork meat and pork products.
2. Support and encourage the monitoring of *Salmonella*, hepatitis E and LA-MRSA to enable: understanding of the prevalence of these organisms; assessment of the risks associated with high prevalence; and assessment of the impact of any reduction strategies applied.
3. Maintain an agreed shared source of information to enable the pork chain to respond accurately and quickly to queries and challenges related to *Salmonella*, hepatitis E and LA-MRSA.

Conclusions

The 2023–2024 reporting period has been one of both resilience and progress for the UK pig industry as it continues to navigate a complex landscape shaped by post-pandemic recovery, evolving regulatory frameworks and persistent health and welfare challenges. PHWC has remained steadfast in its mission to unite stakeholders across the pork supply chain, fostering collaboration, innovation and developing evidence-based strategies to assist in the safeguarding of the health and welfare of the national pig herd.

Throughout this period, PHWC and its four subgroups – Pig Health, Welfare, Antimicrobial Usage and Pig Meat Food Safety – have delivered significant outcomes. These include enhanced disease surveillance and preparedness for endemic or exotic disease incursion, particularly in relation to PRRS and ASF; continued progress in improving antimicrobial stewardship while maintaining animal welfare; and proactive engagement in food safety initiatives to mitigate zoonotic risks. The Council has also been proactive in supporting bids for funding research projects that will provide answers to some knowledge gaps, supported the development of adaptive farrowing systems to improve sow welfare, improved euthanasia protocols and promoted industry-wide training and knowledge exchange.

Despite the decline in breeding herd numbers, abattoir capacity constraints and the withdrawal of zinc oxide, the industry has demonstrated adaptability and a commitment to continuous improvement. PHWC has played a pivotal role in guiding this transition, providing a forum for discussion so that all types of production are considered, ensuring that producers are supported through policy advocacy, cooperating in research collaboration and providing practical tools for implementation.

Looking ahead to 2025–2026, the Council remains focused on its strategic objectives: strengthening disease surveillance, promoting responsible medicine use, enhancing welfare standards and ensuring pork safety from farm to fork. PHWC will continue to act as a central hub for coordination, communication and innovation, ensuring that the UK pig industry remains resilient, sustainable and aligned with the highest standards of animal health and welfare.

Glossary of abbreviations

Abbreviations of organisations or institutions

AIC	Agricultural Industries Confederation
AIG	Allied Industry Group
AHDB	Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board
AHWBE	Animal Health and Welfare Board for England
APHA	Animal and Plant Health Agency
BMPA	British Meat Processors Association
BPA	British Pig Association
BPEX	British Pig Executive (see also AHDB)
BRC	British Retail Consortium
CARS	Control of Antimicrobial Resistance Scotland
Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EU	European Union
FSA	Food Standards Agency
FSS	Food Standards Scotland
LIS	Livestock Information System
NIPBF	Northern Ireland Pork & Bacon Forum
NPA	National Pig Association
NOAH	National Office of Animal Health
PHWC	Pig Health and Welfare Council
PVS	Pig Veterinary Society
QMS	Quality Meat Scotland
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
RT	Red Tractor (see also Assured Food Standards)
RUMA	Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance
SRUC	Scottish Rural University College
UKHSA	UK Health Security Agency
VMD	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
WOAH	World Organisation of Animal Health

Abbreviations of terms

AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
ASF	African swine fever
CCIR	Collection and communication of inspection results
CSF	Classical swine fever
CVO	Chief veterinary officer
eAML2	Electronic animal movement licence
ELISA	Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
FCI	Food chain information
FMD	Foot-and-mouth disease
HEV	Hepatitis E virus
HP-CIA	Highest-priority critically important antibiotics
LA-MRSA	Livestock-associated methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus
MHI	Meat hygiene inspectors
OV	Official veterinarian
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PCU	Population corrected unit
PED	Porcine epidemic diarrhoea
PEDv	Porcine epidemic diarrhoea virus
PHS	Pig Health Scheme
PHU	Persistently high user
PRRS	Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome
PWD	Post-weaning diarrhoea
SD	Swine dysentery
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SVV	Seneca Valley Virus
TGE	Transmissible gastroenteritis
TTF2	Targets Task Force 2
VARSS	Veterinary antibiotic resistance and sales surveillance
VIC	Veterinary investigation centres
VIDA	Veterinary Investigation Diagnosis Analysis

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