

**Edited by Ciarán Carroll
and Orla Kinane**



Welcome to the April edition of our monthly newsletter.

The pig price rise at the start of the month was an overdue but very welcome boost to the sector. We are now 10 cent behind the EU average, but with many countries now in the €1.95-€2.02 per kg dead weight price range we should expect more in the coming weeks.

The Government announcement of a €13 million exceptional aid package is also very welcome and we await the details and delivery of this package very shortly.

As mentioned last month, our main focus at this time is on assisting farmers to review current costs, prepare cashflows and assist in accessing finance to get through this crisis. If you haven't already done this, contact your Advisor now to develop your plan.

With all the pressure that the financial uncertainty brings it's more important than ever to look after your own health. This newsletter has an excellent article by Louise Clarke and John McNamara on Dealing with Stress. In our latest episode of The Pig Edge podcast I talked to George Graham, a sheep farmer from Wexford to discuss his experiences and where to find help. More details on accessing this podcast later in the newsletter. If you need any further information or assistance contact me (details on back page) or any Teagasc PDD Advisor.

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Feature

Dealing with Stress

Louise Clarke and John McNamara

The financial crisis is continuing and leaves pig producers facing huge challenges in terms of falling income and higher costs. The feed price rise earlier this month has exacerbated the situation. This is one of the many issues that can cause stress and associated ill health for farmers. The following article will help producers understand what stress is, identify some of the stress signs and understand how to manage stress.

What is stress?

Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand that makes you feel threatened or upsets your balance in some way. When working properly, stress helps you to stay focused, energetic, and alert. But beyond a certain point, it can stop being helpful and start causing damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships and your quality of life. Anyone can suffer from stress and each individual has a different reaction to stress. Some of the more common warning signs outlined in Table 1 indicate when it's time to manage stress and consider getting help.

Physical signs	Mental signs	Behavioural signs
High blood pressure	Negative attitude	Loss of interest and enjoyment
Muscle tension	Reduced concentration	Withdrawal from friends and family
Disturbed sleep pattern	Forgetfulness and confusion	Irritability and mood swings
Weight change	Difficulty in making decisions	Increased drinking, smoking, or drug use
Reduced energy	Feeling uncertain or overwhelmed	Loss of sense of humour

Table 1: IFA Leaflet - Let's Talk: Dealing with stress

Managing Stress

A key approach to managing stress is recognising the signs and responding to them. Research, however, indicates that provision of information on stress on its own does not affect behaviour. Each person must realise or 'become aware' of the issues leading to stress and then adopt positive strategies to minimise the stressor.

- Talk to trusted family members, neighbours and friends about your challenges.
- Pick up the phone and call your local Teagasc advisor to discuss farming problems. Pig advisors have a suite of 'tools' to assist you with the current crisis.
- Have a regular (at least annual) health check with your doctor. Most practices offer an NCT, where bloods, blood pressure amongst other checks are included. This is a habit that is crucial to long-term health. By visiting your GP regularly, you build up a relationship and a history with your doctor which can break down barriers that might prevent you going to see the doctor if you are stressed.
- Being physically active is a key approach to stress management.
- Eating a balanced diet, including fruit and vegetables.

The most valuable assets that any person has is their health and safety. With pig farmers facing into increasingly difficult times – be it financial, personal or professional – the one thing that shouldn't be neglected is your mental health and well-being. During challenging times like these, it's more important than ever to eat well, take appropriate exercise, get good sleep, and find time to relax.

On the latest episode of The Pig Edge, Ciaran Carrol spoke with George Graham, a farmer who faced up to his own problems in his life and went on to found Awareness Head to Toe, a voluntary group committed to helping farmers with their mental and general health. George gave great

insights and advice from when he had to face his difficulties and how he overcame them. For more information visit: AwarenessHeadtoToe.com or to

listen to the podcast visit: <https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/pigs/the-pig-edge-podcast>

New Nitrate Regulations

Gerard McCutcheon

The EU Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters Regulations (often referred to as the “nitrate” regulations) have been reviewed and updated. The new Statutory Instrument (SI 113 of 2022) came into effect on 11th of March 2022. These changes are important in calculating the volume of pig slurry a farmer may take. The main changes are discussed below.

1. Limit of 170 kg Organic N per hectare:

The limit of 170 kg of organic N per hectare still applies to all farms that import organic fertilisers such as pig manure. The amount considered to be applied to commonage shall not exceed 50 kg of N per hectare. Article 20(1) no longer allows that where imported livestock manure is brought onto a holding that the calculations shall be based on the previous calendar year’s stocking rate (as was the case in SI 605 of 2017). So the calculation is again based on not exceeding 170 kg of organic N per hectare in the current year.

2. Earlier closing date for spread of slurry:

Article 8 (6) states that all slurry must be applied by 8th October in 2022, and 1st of October from 2023 onwards. However Article 8 (7) states “Notwithstanding sub-article (6), slurry may be spread between 8th and 15th October in 2022, and between 1st and 15th October from 2023 in accordance with criteria to be published by the Minister, in consultation with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, by 1st September 2022.

3. New soil testing requirements:

Article 16(3)(f) requires all farms with a grassland stocking rate of 170 kg N/ha or above prior to export of livestock manure shall take soil tests and

shall assume P index 4 until soil tests are taken. From 1st January 2023 all occupiers of holdings with a grassland stocking rate above 130 kg N/ha shall take soil tests and shall assume P index 4 until soil tests are taken. From 1st January 2023 all occupiers of holdings on all arable land shall take soil tests.

4. Low Emission Slurry Spreading:

Article 18 (1) (b) (v) requires Low emission slurry spreading to be used for the application of the slurry produced by pigs on any holding from 1st January 2023.

Soils with a P Index of 1 or 2:

The availability of P in organic manures such as pig slurry is deemed to be 100% available at soil P Index of 3 or 4. If a soil is Index 1 or 2 (see Table 1 below) the availability of the P from organic fertilisers is 50%. The farmer can verify that the soil is Index 1 or 2 by soil sampling his farm. If the farmer does not soil test the land they can still assume Index 3 soil P levels as in previous versions of the regulations.

Table 1: Phosphorus Index system remains as follows:

Soil Index	Soil Phosphorus Ranges (mg/l)	
	Grassland Mineral Soils	Other Crops
1	0.0 – 3.0	0.0 – 3.0
2	3.1 – 5.0	3.1 – 6.0
3	5.1 – 8.0	6.1 – 10.0
4	> 8.0	> 10.0

*Reference SI 113 of 2022

BSAS 2022 Industry Prize Winners Feature

Elisa Arnaud

We're pleased to be able to introduce the winner of this year's Industry Prize – Elisa Arnaud a PhD student in Teagasc, Pig Development Department, Moorepark and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), Ireland; supervised by Dr. Peadar Lawlor (Teagasc) and Prof. Gillian Gardiner (WIT).

'The Industry Prize is designed to get researchers thinking about the commercial implications of their research, appreciating what they as a researcher think is relevant may not be to the end-user. This includes thinking about aspects, such as return on investment or feasibility of introducing new concepts that have been derived from the research. Elisa's presentation was concise, simple, and well-delivered. She had thought about, and demonstrated, the economical, as well as the production, benefits that her research findings could deliver. Her work could be immediately applied to any pig production operation so has the potential to have a huge impact across the industry. The judges were very impressed, and the decision was unanimous. Congratulations Elisa!' Helen Warren, Industry Prize Judge

Elisa was the winner of this year's award for her compelling research paper – 'Post-partum analgesia administration to sows but not split-suckling increased growth and reduced medication usage in piglets.' The paper was based on the results of an experiment to investigate the effects of split-suckling with or without post-partum administration of analgesia to sows on piglet growth as well as antibiotic and anti-

inflammatory usage. Split suckling reduced weaning weight and had no effect on medication usage while piglets raised by sows which received analgesia within 2 hrs after delivery of the placenta were heavier at weaning than piglets raised by sows which did not receive analgesia. These piglets were monitored to slaughter where their carcass weight was significantly heavier. In addition, Elisa observed a reduction in medication usage in piglets raised by sows which had been administered with analgesia. In summary, analgesia administration to sows after farrowing is a simple, cost beneficial intervention which significantly reduces medication usage and improves lifetime growth in pigs.

'I applied for the industry prize to challenge my work and demonstrate my ability to transfer academic research into practical advice which can positively impact commercial pig production and I am delighted and honoured to have won this award. On the completion of my PhD, I would like to work within the animal production industry. I hope that winning the Industry prize will give me visibility and provide new opportunities.' Elisa Arnaud

Prior to starting her PhD, Elisa graduated as an Engineer in Animal Production from the French Higher Education Institute Agrocampus Ouest, working for two years as a Product Manager for a feed additive company. Her PhD will evaluate management and nutritional strategies to improve growth and limit antimicrobial usage in pigs, pre- and post-weaning.

The Pig Edge Podcast

Don't neglect your mental health



With pig farmers facing into increasingly difficult times – be it financial, personal or professional – the one thing that shouldn't be neglected is your mental health and well-being. On the latest episode of The Pig Edge, farmer George Graham joins Ciarán Carroll with insights and advice from when he had to face his own difficulties and how he overcame them. George went on to found [Awareness Head to Toe](#), a voluntary group committed to helping farmers with their mental and general health.

To listen to this episode and more go to: www.teagasc.ie/thepigedge

Recently Published from the PDD

Martyna Lagoda, Laura Boyle and Keelin O'Driscoll recently published '[Risk Factors for Chronic Stress in Sows Housed in Groups, and Associated Risks of Prenatal Stress in Their Offspring](#)'. A literature review on the risk factors for chronic stress in group-housed gestating sows, and the associated prenatal stress consequences for piglets.

Welcome Melissa!



Melissa Cupido has joined the PDD to complete her PhD which looks at provision of different enrichment material to pigs reared in conventional systems and how that impacts

their welfare. Melissa finished her MSc in animal science at Stellenbosch University, on small scale pig holdings, in 2020 then proceeded to work on a piggery in South Africa for 6 months. The project is in collaboration with Teagasc and UCD, supervised by Dr. Keelin O'Driscoll, Dr. Laura Boyle and Dr. Siobhan Mullan.

Best of Luck Dave!



The PDD wish Dave Clarke the very best of luck as he leaves us to take up a lab position in DAFM. Dave has been a valuable member of the PDD and a great colleague.

We wish Dave the very best of luck in all he does in the future!



For more information visit our website
www.teagasc.ie/animals/pigs

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