



Dent Ltd – Leaders in Pig Welfare

Winter 2011

As animal welfare becomes more important to many consumers, farmers are increasingly turning to higher welfare pig production systems to meet demand. Dent Ltd is a perfect example of pork producers who are committed to ensuring a high quality of life for their pigs. For its outstanding achievements, the company was recently presented with a **“Leadership in Pig Welfare”** award at the prestigious Good Farm Animal Welfare Awards event in London hosted by Compassion in World Farming.



Dent Ltd is responsible for approximately 100,000 finishing pigs at any one time, bred and reared in farms across the North West of England. As part of its strict quality control, the welfare of each and every one of the pigs that pass through its system is inherent.

The company operates several outdoor sow units, with weaned pigs housed in spacious straw-based barns. Both systems provide sows and pigs with plenty of space and freedom to root and perform their natural behaviours. Dent’s sows are kept in stable groups to ensure levels of aggression are kept to a minimum and piglets are not tail docked or teeth-clipped.

Individual farrowing is operated on all sites to minimise aggression and cross suckling. Piglets remain inside the farrowing hut for the first week to encourage maternal bonding and ensure good colostrum intake. Individual farrowing enables the farmer to feed each sow independently and so maintain body condition.

Despite not teeth-clipping, Dent’s piglets do not have problems with facial lesions and sows do not suffer udder damage. Dent’s breed their own White Duroc crossed with Large White/Landrace sows which produce on average 10 piglets per litter. The smaller litter and good sow condition alleviate potential facial and udder damage issues.

On average weaning takes place when the eldest piglets are 28 days old and weighing around 7.5kg. Pre-wean mortality is around 12-13%. Piglets are weaned into straw based buildings with kennels at around 0.8m²/pig until they reach 40kg. The pigs are then moved into large straw barns and given 1.5m² each until they reach slaughter weight of 110kg.



Despite not tail docking, Dent’s farmers rarely have incidences of tail biting. Space, appropriate natural ventilation and plenty of manipulable material such as daily fresh straw and play objects keep the pigs fully occupied and help reduce the risk of tail biting. Careful consideration is also given to the number and position of drinkers and feeders as well as ambient temperature, which in turn also reduces the risk of tail biting.

Dent's managers believe that working to high welfare standards and achieving quality pork certified to the RSPCA Freedom Foods™ Assurance Scheme has enabled them to stay competitive in the British pork industry.

David Neal, Dent Farm Production Manager comments: *"Dent's farms' success is down to immaculately kept buildings; plenty of straw and genuine care for the welfare of the pigs. Dent's farms are proof that farms can be productive and profitable while keeping the welfare of the pigs at the heart of the process"*.



Compassion in World Farming's **Leadership in Pig Welfare** award in 2011 recognised producers and companies that are demonstrating significant achievements relating to the non-confinement of sows, and the elimination of tail docking or tooth clipping or grinding in meat pigs. The Leadership Award was a precursor to the Good Pig Award to be launched in 2012, and in January we will be calling for entrants.



Compassion in World Farming offers free, objective advice and consultancy from a team of staff who work across the whole of the food industry. To find out more about how we can help you improve welfare standards for your pigs, please contact one of the Food Business Team:

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