

# Health – a priority for performance and profit

**Uniform growth and quality pigs require careful management and attention to detail. All these factors and more shine through at Lee Warner's finishing unit. Jane Jordan went along to see just how he achieves this.**



**Graham Tucker, managing director, Bedfordia Livestock:** "You have a commitment to your customers to provide them with what they require."

The science of enzymes in pig nutrition is a global business. Trial results from across the world confirm the benefits of these tools of digestion, and no matter what type of system is used enzymes can help to improve animal performance.

Finnfeeds used the British Pig and Poultry Fair as an opportunity to show European compounders and pig producers how the UK is getting to grips with enzyme technology.

Visitors from Germany, Denmark, France, Holland and Portugal saw first hand how Dalgety Agriculture is using Porzyme in a number of its pig diets. A visit to one of Bedfordia Livestock's contract producers focused on practical applications.

## First contractor

Bedfordia Livestock produces and markets 22,045 pigs a year. Lee Warner is its first contract producer and he does an exceptional job, says Graham Tucker managing director.

His unit, the Oaks at Markfield, near Leicester, is around 20 years old with 60

acres of grassland. Lee bought the unit two years ago after being made redundant. He has always been a pig stockman but felt it was time to start out on his own and so ploughed all his savings into buying the farm.

He says friends said he was crazy. The industry was in recession with a very uncertain future; but Lee was determined. Careful planning and the prospect of the finishing contract spurred cautious optimism. Modernisation has been done on a budget but the cash has been spent wisely. Spacious, deep straw yards replace the old grower pens and rear pigs from 30 up to 60 kg. Each pen holds 220 pigs which are fed ad-lib by Quality Equipment outdoor hoppers to keep out the birds.

## Damps bedding

Each pen uses about 17 round bales of straw which keeps pigs warm in cold temperatures but cool when it's hot. During the summer Lee damps down bedding in the morning. It encourages pigs to lie in the cool straw rather than in the muck, he says.

The system is simple but is performing far better than Lee initially expected.

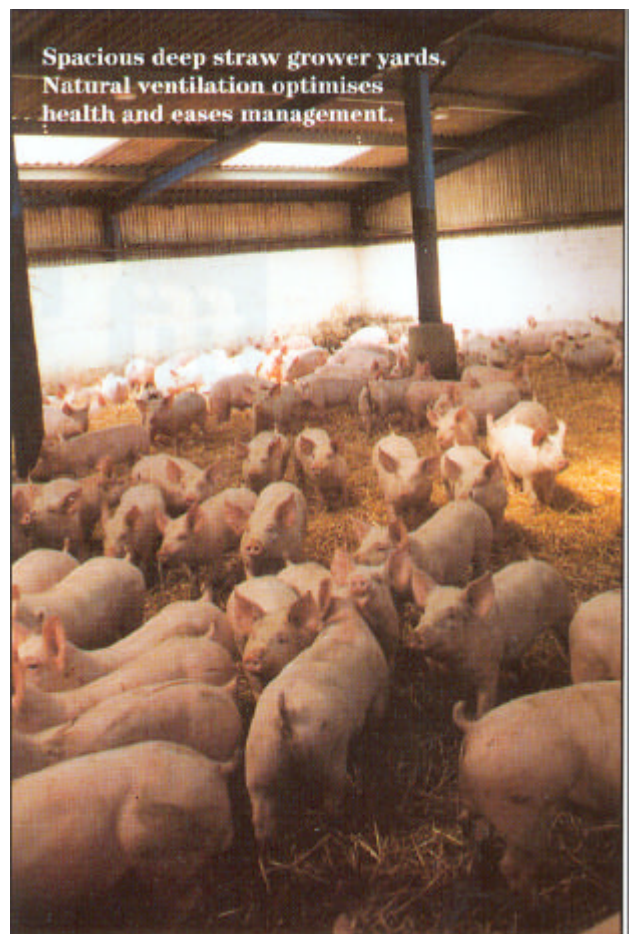
The overseas visitors were amazed by the capacity of each pen and the apparent 'lack of control.' However, as Graham Tucker explains, the system is very efficient, it optimises health and eases management. Pigs are supplied from two breeding units - each has respiratory disease. However, the spacious, well ventilated straw yards help to control the

problem without the need for medication. If there is a breakdown pigs are treated individually.

Health and hygiene are priorities at Bedfordia, and all units are members of the Pig Assurance Scheme. The Oaks follows a strict all-in, all-out policy where every pen is pressure washed thoroughly and rested between each batch.

## Divided

Pigs are moved onto a wet feeding system for finishing from 55-92 kg. They are divided into groups according to size and reared in a traditional kennel type system. Despite being fairly intensive, the housing has an ambient, comfortable environment.



**Table 1. Bedfordia Livestock Pig Enterprise**

Average performance	
Pigs born alive/litter	10.5
Litters/sow/year	2.33
pigs reared/sow/year	22.4
pre-weaning mortality (%)	8
mortality weaning to finish (%)	2.1
Finished weight (kg/wt)	91.7
FCR	2.6
Average back fat (mm)	10
Dalehead Q grade (%)	92.5

Pigs are fed three times a day by a home-made system comprising a mixing tank and pump. Again pigs do very well, growing uniformly with minimum health problems. All animals are weighed before dispatch to ensure they meet contract specifications.

Diets are formulated by Dalgety and include some of the Optima range. Porzyme has been used successfully in grower rations to reduce colitis from between 5-10 per cent to below 1 per cent. FCR and mortality have also benefited. Lee says the system works extremely well. But it is his skilled stockmanship and attention to detail which Graham Tucker says is the secret of success.

As he explains, the farm lends itself to Bedfordia's concepts - all farms operate to BQAPI standards. It is isolated, maintains a high health status with the first class stockmanship quality pig production demands.

The company has a strict genetic policy and uses only Cotswold stock.

All terminal sires are Halothane free as quality and welfare go hand in hand, says Graham.

The company aims to keep stress to a minimum. He says too many people stress pigs unnecessarily during loading and transport.

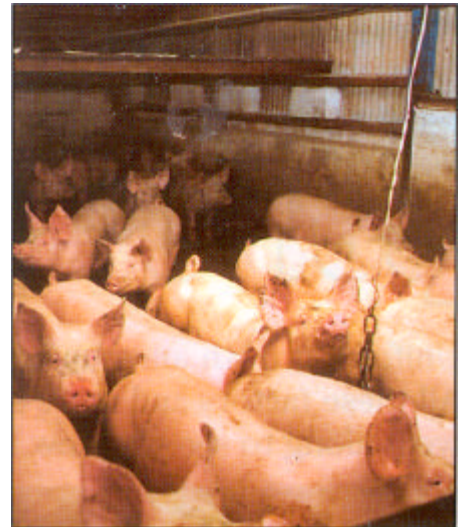
### Own hauliers

Bedfordia uses its own licensed hauliers to ensure pigs arrive at the processors in prime condition. Pigs are processed through Dalehead Foods in Cambridgeshire.

"You have a commitment to your customer to provide them with what they require. You can't just forget about those pigs once they have left the farm," he says.

Bedfordia has an exceptional record. It has only ever lost one pig in transit from the Oaks to date.

Lee Warner does an exceptional job. His pigs are proof that attention to detail and careful health management promote



**Uniform growth from 55-92 kg. Pigs are finished to BQAPI standards in the traditional kennel-type system.**

high welfare, exceptional performance and profitability. He hopes to increase capacity over the next few months to about 3500 pig places.

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