

# Westminster *brief*

AN OCCASIONAL BRIEFING FOR WESTMINSTER OPINION-FORMERS — BY BRITAIN'S LEADING FOOD PRODUCERS

## OUR PROMISE

This new **stewardship programme** will research and address society's concerns about **antibiotics** in British pork production

By Dr Georgina Crayford

National Pig Association is launching an antibiotic stewardship programme to achieve minimum use of antibiotics, consistent with responsible human and food-animal medicine. There will be six strands (see panel).

We recognise and share society's concerns about the level of antibiotic use in human and livestock medicine. In particular we acknowledge the risk, albeit small, of antibiotic resistance developing in bacteria in pigs and this resistance spreading to humans.

In a bid to ensure and demonstrate responsible use of antibiotics in pigs, National Pig Association is introducing the Pig Industry Antibiotic Stewardship Programme and is working with Pig Veterinary Society, industry levy body AHDB Pork, and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to progress its goals.

Although antibiotic resistance in humans is largely caused by over-use and misuse of antibiotics in human medicine, the British pig industry has a duty to ensure it does not contribute to the problem.

Overall sales of antibiotics for use in livestock in the United Kingdom sit mid-range compared to other European Union countries.

We acknowledge the current perception that antibiotic use in our pig industry may be higher



Dr Georgina Crayford is National Pig Association's senior policy adviser.

than in some other countries, but we don't have any data to demonstrate what our actual on-farm usage is, hence the need for action.

The first, and most important goal of the stewardship programme will be to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on current use of antibiotics in British pig husbandry.

This will be achieved through the industry's newly-introduced online medicines book, created by levy-board AHDB Pork, working with Veterinary Medicines Di-

rectorate.

When the electronic medicines book has been sufficiently populated, producers will be able to benchmark their use of antibiotics with anonymised data from other farms of the same type, and to work with their vets to drive down overall use.

### STEPS SO FAR

The pig sector has already taken key actions to guard against resistance in critically important human medicines.

- Following a recent finding of resistance to colistin in bacteria from pigs in the United Kingdom, the Pig Veterinary Society has re-categorised this product as Class 3 in its prescribing principles for antimicrobials. This means colistin may only be prescribed as a last-resort, when no other options are available, and only after antibiotic sensitivity testing.

- Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid was also moved to Class 3 recently, and joins third and fourth generation cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones, which are recognised as critically important for human medicine. There are no veterinary medicines for livestock containing third and fourth generation cephalosporins available in an in-feed or in-water formulation, so these antibiotics are only ever administered to individual animals.

### Pig Industry Antibiotic Stewardship Programme

1. Capture and collate antibiotic use data recorded on pig farms.
2. Benchmark each farm's antibiotic use against other farms of a similar type.
3. Extend education in effective disease control strategies.
4. Reduce antibiotic use, consistent with responsible human and food-animal medicine.
5. Promote veterinary prescribing principles to strictly limit the use of antibiotics of critical importance to human health.
6. Appoint Stewardship Commissioners who will continually review industry's use of antimicrobials and champion initiatives.

**MAKE US YOUR FIRST PORT OF CALL FOR THE FACTS** National Pig Association's newsletter Westminster Brief raises awareness of pig industry issues with key political opinion-formers. When anything pig- or pork-related crosses your desk, please come to us to get the facts about Britain's forward-looking unsubsidised pig farmers. We bring scientific balance to the claims of lobbying organisations such as the Soil Association and Compassion in World Farming. — Lizzie Wilson, policy services officer, National Pig Association.

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## ASDA pledge will help us ride out lowest prices for 16 years

A promise by ASDA to increase its fresh pork to 80 percent British by next year has been welcomed by British pig farmers, who face losses of around £150m in 2016, as a result of low prices caused by Europe's frozen-pork mountain. ASDA, which accounts for over 16 percent of the nation's food and drink sales, also plans to move all its own-brand sausages to British pork by July, in order to improve quality. 'We'll be discussing milestones over the weeks ahead,' said NPA chief executive Dr. Zoe Davies. 'But if ASDA moves ahead at a brisk pace, it will help keep the British pig sector relatively intact at a time when real-term prices are at their lowest for 16 years.'

## Lidl shines in survey, except on fresh pork

The latest pig industry Porkwatch survey holds some disappointments, with Lidl departing NPA's British fresh pork 'hundred percenters club'. But Lidl is up significantly on British bacon, sausages and ham, compared with this time last year. And Asda is up on British bacon compared with a year ago, and up slightly on British sausages compared with last Porkwatch. Tesco is a poor performer, down on British pork, bacon, ham and sausages compared to January Porkwatch, and Sainsbury's also shows an uncharacteristic downward trend. NPA will be going through the data with retailers.

## Sainsbury's proves foodservice customers want British meat

The key to success in foodservice is to source British meat — and make sure you tell your customers loud and clear, says the National Pig Association.

It cites Sainsbury's which has extended its policy of 100 percent British pork, ham and sau-

sages to its sandwiches and in-store cafés — a sector which has seen over ten percent growth for the retailer over the past year. Sainsbury's makes a point of using the Union Flag on pork products in-store, and is now extending this to its foodservice messaging.

# Shoppers want meals to be quick and convenient

Pig farmers don't get subsidies. They are entirely reliant on being close to the market, and supplying what the market wants

By Dr Zoe Davies

English pig farmers' theme for this year is 'Quick and Convenient'.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, pig farming doesn't benefit from European Union subsidies, so producers rely on getting close to their customers and responding quickly to their needs.

National Pig Association's continuous dialogue with supermarkets has identified a new growth in demand over recent months for convenience foods.

Notwithstanding the enduring popularity of bacon, sausages and ham, pork is under-represented in the convenience sector, where chicken leads the way.

I'm pleased to report our allied industry group chairman Hugh Crabtree has got the bit between his teeth. 'We're going to fix that!' he says. 'I want to see a chain of High Street pork fast-food outlets. I don't see why Colonel Sanders should have it all his own way.'

Step one will be to hold a national competition this year — probably with a leading supermarket — for new pork-based convenience dishes. I'm sure the



nation's family cooks will rise to the challenge.

Our goal is to highlight British pork's taste, versatility and value-for money. And we want to achieve this in new meals that can be ready to serve in 30 minutes or less. That's the new paradigm in most British kitchens these days, the supermarkets tell us.

• Dr Zoe Davies is chief executive of the National Pig Association.

## Aldi helps drive British pork mid-week popularity

NPA has praised Aldi for boosting sales of pork at a time when British pig farmers are suffering their second year of poor returns, caused by the European Union's frozen-pork mountain.

The discounter, which sells 100 percent British fresh pork, has reported sales up over ten percent in volume. Leg and shoulder joints have sold particularly well, partly because of the English pig industry's popular Pulled Pork adverts on peak-time television, but mainly due to Aldi's competitive pricing strategy. Aldi is taking a raft of measures to increase mid-week pork sales, including moving ready-to-cook gammon-and-honey from europork to British pork. In January and February it also launched eight pork promotions including sausages, large packs of pork medallions, slow-cooked gammon shanks, and pork fillet with apple butter.

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## These anti-farming activists bring **fear and disruption** to the entire planning process



Lizzie Wilson, National Pig Association policy services officer.



Part of the democratic process, or unacceptable intimidatory tactics? NPA has told a Government call for evidence on rural planning that the whole planning process is being undermined.

British pig-keepers are increasingly encountering misinformation campaigns by vegan anti-farming groups when they apply for planning permission, says National Pig Association in its submission to a Government call for evidence on rural planning

By Lizzie Wilson

We have recently encountered a number of cases in which animal rights organisations have either launched an online petition garnering thousands of signatures from all over the world against a pig planning application, or have resorted to smear campaigns.

These groups aim to incite fear and antipathy and they disrupt the entire planning process.'

Animal welfare ethics are not a planning consideration and these campaigns damage applicants' businesses and the reputation of the British pig industry as a whole. They also intimidate local residents, planning committees and local authorities.

Animal rights organisations, such as Animal Aid, by their own admission share the common objective of stopping meat-eating altogether and some are prepared to employ any approach to achieve this.

Tactics employed by activists include gathering on-farm footage and photos by trespassing at night, often breaching biosecurity

protocols and endangering the health and welfare of the animals.

Footage and photos are sometimes manipulated and are therefore not a true representation of conditions on a pig unit.

Furthermore, animal rights organisations have been known to wait for up to six months to raise any welfare concerns.

And when they do, it is with the media — whereas any genuine animal welfare concerns should be reported directly to the competent authority immediately.

## Night-time trespassing is part of the democratic process, claim animal rights activists

Animal Aid has accused National Pig Association of foul play in its representation to Government over rural planning, insisting its own actions are part of the democratic process. It says it will be seeking legal advice over NPA's claims. Animal Aid director Andrew Tyler says

his organisation is peaceful, does not damage property, observes strict biosecurity measures and rather than intimidating local people, it works with them. 'The process that so troubles the NPA is called democracy: a proposal comes before the relevant local authority, the

details are put into the public domain and people have their say,' he told Farmers Weekly. 'The results might not please the NPA, but the question it must ask itself is this: Why do these proposed vast pig units meet with such strong opposition?'

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## When Putin put in the Russian boot, he delivered two year's of hardship and bankruptcies for Europe's pig farmers

Cheap feed could take the sting out of European Union pigmeat over-production for only so long — and now at last the pig-cycle has started to turn, as continental producers quit production in response to two years of eye-watering losses

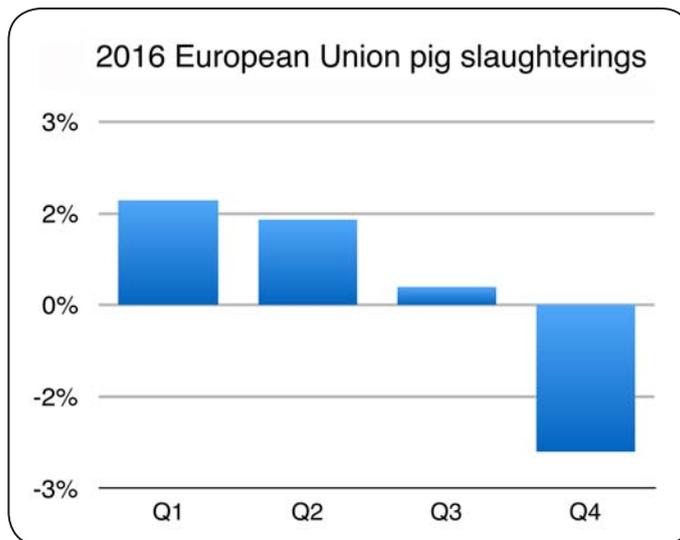
By Richard Lister

There are signs the pig cycle is starting to turn, and about time too. In the first quarter of this year prices received by British pig producers were their lowest for 16 years, in real terms.

British pig prices have been on a downward trend for over two years and only now are they starting to edge, ever so slowly northwards again, as a result of seasonal influences.

Producers have been losing around 20p a kilo and if this level of loss is sustained through 2016, total losses to British pig farmers will be just under £150m.

The pain has been caused



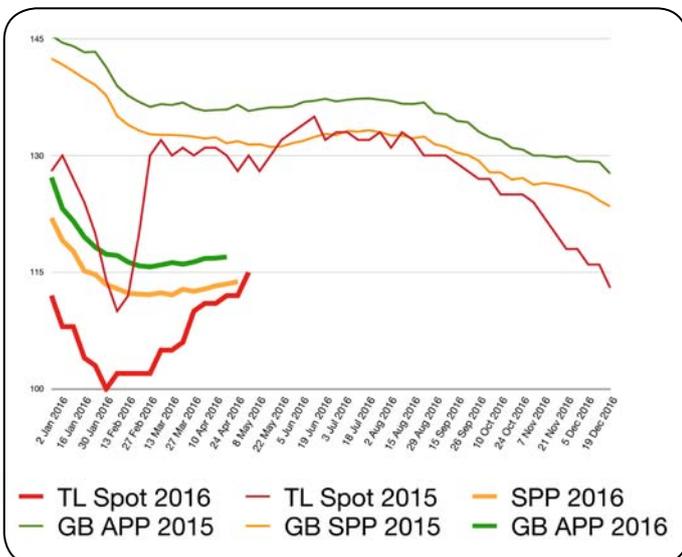
National Pig Association chairman Richard Lister farms in North Yorkshire.

by over-supply on the European Union market, caused by Russia's two ongoing embargoes on European Union pork, one in response to outbreaks of African swine fever in Poland and the Balkans, the other to the continuing geopolitical tensions over Ukraine.

The European Union exported £773m worth of pigmeat to Russia in the year preceding its two embargoes on European Union pigmeat imports. And despite a bullish commentary from Brussels it has proved impossible to find new export homes for most of the displaced product.

Under such circumstances the continental pig herd would normally have started to contract after about 12 months, in response to unsustainable producer prices.

But the last two years have been anything but normal with high global grain yields providing a continuous supply of low-cost feed, which accounts for about 60 percent of the cost of raising pigs.



Above: European Union pig slaughterings will grow only slightly in quarter three and will fall significantly in quarter four, according to data from Brussels, based on gross indigenous production and forecasts by member countries. If the predictions prove correct, they herald the beginning of the end of price pressure on British producers, and the prospect of a return to profit in 2017, as European producers adapt to lower demand caused by Russia's embargoes. The figures make particularly encouraging reading when compared with the growth in production recorded throughout 2015.

Above: Although only a small part of the total pig market, British spot prices (as shown by the red 'Traffic Lights Spot' line), are at last poised to overtake British contract prices (Standard Pig Price and All Pig Price), indicating tightening supplies at last.

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## When Putin put in the Russian boot

▶ But cheap feed could disguise the pain of loss-making pig prices for only so long, and now the continental herd is shrinking, with pigmeat production forecast to be down over 2 percent in the fourth quarter of this year. This, in turn, signals a return next year to break-even prices for British producers.

But there have been a number of casualties, and these are expected to be highlighted by Defra's June 2016 national pig herd census.

Longer-term, the European Union is going to have to learn to live without the Russian market anyway as Russia steps up its drive for self-sufficiency — although it still has a long way to go.

## We're not after a fortune — just a fair price

The British pig industry isn't asking for hand-outs, just a fair price, said Lincolnshire producer David Owers on BBC's World at One programme.

'We're never going to be multi-millionaires. We just want to make a living. And it's hard work. I'm here at five o'clock in the morning and leave at six o'clock at night. And you shouldn't feel then, that you have to sell your pigs at a loss.'

He told BBC's lunchtime audience, 'Most pig farmers are losing at least £10 a pig. If you're selling 200 pigs a week, that means you're losing £2,000 a week. It's totally unsustainable. It can't go on.'

David Owers, who manages a 700-sow unit, finishing half the progeny and selling the rest as weaners, was Pig Producer of the Year in the National Pig Awards 2014.

## Select committee highlights levy board's failure to help producers survive lean times

*Efra committee members have called into question AHDB's position on marketing. They were surprised when the levy-board 'seemed to downplay the impact that a successful marketing campaign could have on stimulating demand'*

By Digby Scott

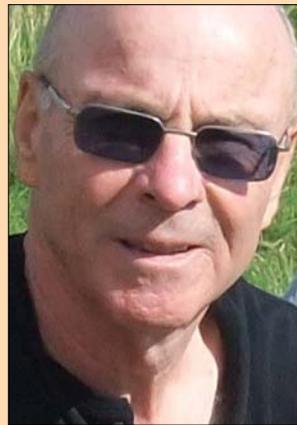
The unedifying spectacle of livestock producers not being able to invest their own levy in improving consumption, particularly at a time of flagging demand and low farm-gate prices, has been highlighted in a House of Commons select committee report.

'It is vital that United Kingdom products are promoted successfully in the marketplace, especially in a period of declining consumer demand,' say MPs in a report on farm-gate prices.

'The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board needs to ensure products, such as lamb, are promoted at the peak period of production.'

The report calls on AHDB to work closely with its levy-payers to consider their views. It recommends an increase in the proportion of AHDB income spent on marketing.

This pointed report by MPs comes at a time when a number of livestock producers are poised to call for a wider select committee inquiry into the role of AHDB — in a bid to understand how its newly en-



larged upper-tier of centralised management gives value to levy-payers.

In the Efra committee report, MPs call into question AHDB's position on marketing. They say they were 'surprised' when AHDB 'seemed to downplay the impact that a successful marketing campaign could have on stimulating demand'.

Their comments are a response to written evidence by NPA and oral evidence by NPA policy services officer Lizzie Press.

'The NPA told us about the impact a successful marketing campaign could have — a recent pulled pork campaign had increased volume sales of pork shoulder by 19.2 percent and there had been a halo effect in sales of fresh pork, which increased by £7.8 million as a direct result of the campaign.'

The Efra report also cites a recent poll by *Farmers Guardian* where more than 60 percent of respondents said AHDB should allocate more funding to consumer promotion.

In its report, the Efra com-

mittee disputes AHDB's assertion that no money was lost as a result of delays to recent beef and lamb campaigns. It says Defra and AHDB must ensure there are no repeats of such delays in the future.

It also cites evidence from NPA which expressed concern the AHDB levy and its use for marketing purposes, and promotional activity in particular, is increasingly being restricted and dictated by Government.

It highlights NPA's view that Ministers and civil servants do not have the necessary expertise 'to prejudge professional marketing campaigns'.

It may be timely, says the report, for wider questions to be asked about the role of Government in signing off AHDB expenditure, 'and whether farmers and other levy-payers should have the final say on expenditure'.

In its inquiry into farm-gate prices, the Efra committee heard from witnesses who were concerned delays in beef and lamb promotions had a negative impact on sales of red meat.

The National Sheep Association told the committee its members were 'seriously let down by the fact that our promotional activities in England have been so delayed, at a time when the seasonal product was coming through'.

• Digby Scott is formerly publisher of *Pig World*, the leading British pig industry magazine. He is National Pig Association's webmaster.

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## 'Critical friends' will help British pig farmers meet consumer expectations

It is impossible for every operator in every industry to be beyond reproach at all times — but everyone should strive to achieve this goal, and British pig farmers are no exception

By Digby Scott

National Pig Association is urging its members to adopt best practice at all times and in every aspect of pig production.

It will be advising members to regularly invite non-farming acquaintances to look round the nation's pig farms in the role of 'critical friends', as a fresh pair of eyes is always helpful.

'The vast majority of British pig farmers strive to achieve best-

practice at all times and this has earned them a global reputation for high-welfare animal husbandry,' said animal scientist Dr Zoe Davies, NPA's chief executive.

'But we are always listening to the evolving expectations of our customers and we aim to meet those expectations through a policy of continual improvement.'

NPA, which represents nearly 80 percent of England's commercial pig production, is currently dispatching posters to all its members, reminding pig unit staff of crucial end-of-day routines.

NPA also operates a Confidential Reporting Service, which obliges farm staff and visitors to report any shortcomings they observe via a confidential hotline, so that an independent spot check can be carried out to ensure the unit is complying with all legal requirements.

NPA is also urging members to fit infrared security cameras in order to collect evidence for private prosecutions against activists who break into pig units — and it hopes livestock producers in other sectors will do the same.

'Tampering with doors and windows is unwelcome, but our real concern is the risk of introducing disease to high-health pig units, where a subsequent health break-down can cost thousands of pounds to remedy,' said NPA chairman Richard Lister.

'It is our view that anti-meat campaigners who try and gain ac-

**npa**

### Mandatory end of day routine

Staff must always be given time to complete this day-end routine

**PUT WELFARE FIRST**

- Before you leave check whether the livestock need anything, and provide it.
- Remember, if it needs an explanation to say it's okay, then it's not okay.
- Have all the pigs got sufficient bedding for the night?
- Have all pigs been released from service stalls?
- Should any livestock be hospitalised tonight?
- Ensure any animals that have received treatment have been spray-marked.
- Carry out temporary repairs to any damage so there are no injuries during the night.
- Consider... how good does the worst pig on the unit look?
- Don't go home until you have resolved any issue you wouldn't want to see in the Press tomorrow.

**KEEP THIS UNIT TIDY**

- Put the dead bin where it cannot easily be seen.
- Put all dead pigs, tails and afterbirth in the dead bin and lock it.
- Under no circumstances leave dead pigs in passageways overnight.
- Treat drugs for what they are — drugs — and keep them clean, cool and secure.
- Never leave bottles on display, with syringes sticking out of them.
- Put away deliveries promptly — boxes and parcels piled up in the entrance porch give a wrong first impression.
- Lock away all paperwork and safely dispose of old paperwork.
- Refill the incinerator.
- Everything has a home. Put it back at the end of each day so it's easy to find tomorrow.
- Spilt feed is unprofitable. Clean it up or rats and mice will.
- Remember — anything that doesn't look right, isn't right.

**NEVER FORGET SECURITY**

- All lights off and all doors locked.

**WORK SMARTER TOMORROW**

- Act as if the farm assurance auditor or a member of the public is coming round today.
- Every week walk round a part of the unit you are not responsible for — fresh eyes see more.
- Get onto maintenance early, before a routine job becomes a full-blown crisis.
- Tidiness is a state of mind and should be part of the way you work — it saves time.
- String, muck, paper, you name it... if you drop it, pick it up.

**WORK TIDY**

### Important pig unit evening routines include the following

- Check all animals have sufficient bedding for the night.
- Check whether any animals need special treatment.
- Check there is no damage that could cause injuries during the night.
- Never go home until any welfare issues have been resolved.
- Ensure all medicines are under lock and key.

cess to our buildings at night are trying to influence local planners to refuse permission for new pig units.

'But if that is their goal, they are being very short-sighted, because it just means more pork and pork products on supermarket

shelves will be imported, much of it from countries with lower welfare standards.

'Our customers want to know when they buy British pork they are buying the highest farming standards in the world — and that's what we aim to deliver.'

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Dear Xandra,

**How do I persuade ordinary people to support the *Food from farms, not factories* campaign we launched recently? A few celebrities are on our side but they don't seem to be getting the message across to people in Walthamstow and West Bromwich.**

Tarka Valentine-Cheshyre

Dear Tarka,

I've met your leader, Lady Tracy Worcester, several times around Knightsbridge and you couldn't hope to encounter a nicer, more sincere person, especially now she's given up acting and runs the animal rights group 'Farms Not Factories'. You could call her the acceptable face of animal rights activism, because unlike most activists she is not a radical vegan opposed to absolutely all livestock farming.

## About us

**NATIONAL PIG ASSOCIATION** is the representative trade association for British commercial pig producers. It is allied to the National Farmers Union and represents the pig interests of NFU members.

Chairman **Richard Lister**, vice-chairman **Richard Longthorp OBE**, chief executive **Dr Zoe Davies**, policy services officer **Lizzie Wilson**, senior adviser **Dr Georgina Crayford**.

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## It's a really romantic setting, so why aren't they getting aroused?

### Scratchings

All she wants is for farming to be a bit more like a Constable painting, and who would naysay her? It does seem a bit harsh that you're not striking a chord with those of us made from more common clay, who enjoy oven-chips, pork scratchings and ready-meals from Tesco. But I think I know where you're going wrong — you're fighting a battle that's already been won, you silly sausage!

As Waitrose sells only free-range and outdoor-bred British pork anyway, you probably haven't noticed, but British pig farmers are unique in the world in offering shoppers a range of husbandry systems, from the sort of modern indoor housing you would find in Holland or Denmark, right through to free-range, where the pigs spend all their lives outdoors.

Even Aldi and Lidl are offering a choice these

# ask



Xandra

days, so all shoppers need to do is read the label, and neoclassical economics is such a wonderful thing, that the more people who choose free-range pork, why, the more pig farmers will produce for them!

The trouble is, Tarka, outdoor pigs have smaller litters and they don't grow as quickly as their pampered air-conditioned indoor cousins, so the kind of pork you want us all to buy costs more than some families can afford. Don't you think it's a teensy bit arrogant of you to assume otherwise?

And as for calling larger farms 'factories', well perhaps that's a bit arrogant too, because all farmers are doing is responding to the economic signals of their customers. You must ask me to explain 'Real Welfare' audits to you one day, and then perhaps you'll have a better understanding of the subject. Meanwhile, good luck with your celebrities Tarka. I know your heart is in the right place.

If they get too downcast, why not make them a yummy free-range bacon sandwich from Jimmy Butler's [Blythburgh Free Range Pork?](#)

Xandra

## European Union pig farmers will carry on castrating

Castration is banned outright in Britain by the leading quality assurance schemes, which account for over 90 percent of all slaughter pigs, but it remains standard procedure on the continent where castration — without pain relief — is still common in most countries, with more than 50 percent of male pigs still castrated without any anaesthesia or analgesia,

in violation of a European declaration that promised anaesthesia or analgesia would be used after January 2012, according to a survey by the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe. And given the current economic climate, the vets believe it unlikely traditional pig farmers will cease castration 'unless it becomes mandatory in one way or another'.