

SA Farms in PRRS Survey

by Colin Cargill

A national survey is being undertaken to confirm that Australia is free of Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory (disease) Syndrome (PRRS).

Australia is one of the few pig producing countries that claims to be free of the disease and confirmation of this freedom should have considerable trade implications for Australian pigmeat and breeding stock. A negative result from the survey will also give more weight to Australian demands that imported meat be treated to inactivate the virus and reduce the risk to the Australian pig industry.

The survey involves testing bacon pigs at slaughter from 157 herds across Australia, which includes 25 herds from South Australia. Herds from all parts of SA are involved with the majority being located in the Adelaide Plains, Mid-North and Murraylands. However, herds from Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas and the Mallee have also been included.

The bloods are being collected through the Pig health Monitoring Scheme (PHMS) and

processed at Vet Lab, before sending to the Australian Animal Health Laboratories (AAHL) in Geelong for testing. Dr Patricia Holyoake from the Victorian Agriculture Department is co-ordinating the survey.

The survey is being funded by the Pig Research and Development Corporation (PRDC) and was designed by Australian animal health authorities, in consultation with the Pork Council of Australia (PCA). The final format was approved by Agriculture Canada.

PRRS is a viral disease which appeared in Europe and North America during the 1980's and produces a wide range of clinical signs in different age groups of pigs.

Sows may abort in late pregnancy but the most marked change is an increase in the number of stillborns and weak piglets, which die within a few days of birth.

Post-weaning death rates also increase with pigs showing respiratory signs.

Secondary infections with other viruses and bacteria also play an important role in the severity of clinical signs.

Although herds may develop herd immunity and clinical signs may abate after a few months, in most countries the disease has continued to have a significant effect on pig production.

The majority of European and North American countries are infected with PRRS, as well as a number of Asian countries including Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia.

Other countries that claim to be free of PRRS include New Zealand, Norway, Finland and Ireland.

The only other countries to use blood testing to confirm freedom from PRRS are the Republic of Ireland and the province of Northern Ireland. Denmark is considering using blood testing, along with vaccination, as part of a national control program.

NPRU Closure

The official closure of the Northfield Pig Research Unit was conducted on December 18th, 1995 with a luncheon attended by past members of the unit's various management committees. Past NPRU and Swine Compensation Fund Liaison Committees were well represented with some dating back to the 1969-70 inception of the Unit.

Paul Heap, well remembered for his untiring vigilance in maintaining the Unit's biosecurity during his 20 years as piggery manager, entertained the current crop of researchers with stories of his latest role as meat inspector at a Riverland emu processing plant.

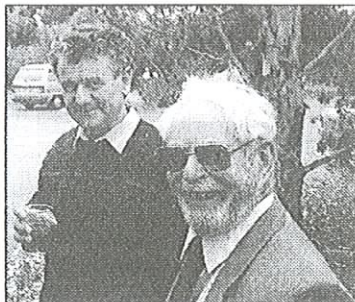
Former Chief Veterinary Officer, 'Brick' Smith reflected on the Department's early work at eliminating TB from the state herd, and the implementation of pre-slaughter pig branding.

And John Radcliffe, former Officer in Charge of the Northfield Research Centre who maintains a watchful eye on Industry developments through continued readership of Pig Industry News, closed the function with an illustrated history of the Unit's achievements and contributions to Industry over the past 25 years.

At the close of proceedings, what must have amounted to over 500 years of pig production, management, research and administration experience walked out of the Unit's conference room for the last time to be reinvested in the new facilities at the PPPI.



"Brick" Smith addressing the troops.



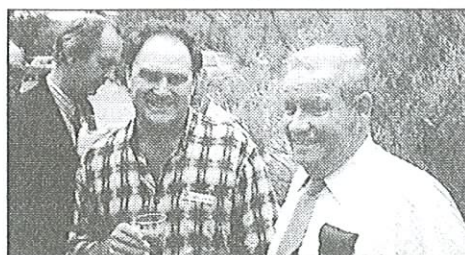
Alan Mosel (left) and Jim McAuliffe.



John Radcliffe (left) shares a lighter moment with Kevin Dobson.



Lance Dawkins (left) and "Brick" Smith.



Andrew Pointen (left) and Paul Heap