

Northfield scores first Aust. pig ovum transplant

Five piglets born at the SA Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Northfield pig research unit last week marked what is believed to be Australia's first successful pig ovum transplant.

The litter was born to an unmated sow, the result of a surgical transfer of eggs from a mated sow.

The Northfield team, led by the department's senior veterinary officer, pigs, Dr.

Peter Whyte, achieved the successful transplant at the first attempt.

The ovum transplant technique has several important research and commercial applications, some of them already proved in the sheep and cattle fields.

On the commercial side it would enable genetic transfer between herds, and could

• Continued on page 11

have uses in the import and export of new genetic material.

Development of the technique could, on a long-term basis, make it possible to ease some of the quarantine restrictions on importing new breeding stock.

As far as research is concerned ovum transplant methods are seen as important new tools in investigating immunological and disease mechanisms.

Dr. Whyte's team used two sows selected from the Northfield pig research unit's own herd for the experiment.

Four days after one of the sows was mated the veterinarians operated on her to recover seven eggs, five of them showing signs of having been fertilised.

These were then implanted directly, again using surgical techniques, into the uterus of the unmated sow.

After an uneventful pregnancy the second sow gave birth of five healthy piglets.