News Release
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*For immediate use*

**Quality Meat Scotland supporting PPC environmental permit work in Sottish pig sector**

For larger pig producers, the burden of working with the Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) regulations can be considerable. Following regulations, keeping abreast of changing rules and their interpretation, dealing with inspections and maintaining paperwork just add to the already-considerable workload of running a successful pig business.

But for larger producers in Scotland, an innovative approach involving Scottish Pig Producers, NFUS and the QMS Pig Forum, levy-funded by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), is helping to ease the burden. It is also helping the sector work as one cohesive body with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).

For some years now, Perth-based environmental consultancy Johnson Allan has been contracted by QMS to assist Scottish pig producers in obtaining and maintaining PPC permits, which are required under the PPC regulations. For Julie Allan, director of Johnson Allan, it’s been a long-term project.

“I started working on PPC in the pig sector when it first came in, during the 2000s. We initially visited farms to see whether they fell in the scope of the legislation, and I have been involved ever since, though the regulations and their interpretation have changed a fair bit during that time.

“We are contracted to QMS so that if any Scottish pig producer is considering expanding or changing anything, we are there to help as it’s not a straightforward process.”

When a pig business reaches the PPC threshold of 2,000 or more pigs over 30kg, or 750 or more breeding sows, producers have to apply for a PPC permit. They pay the application fee and ongoing subscription fee, but the work to apply for the permit and assist with its maintenance is done by Johnson Allan, funded by QMS. There are currently 16 pig producers who are PPC permit holders in Scotland.

“Producers often perceive the application as very involved, and it can get complicated because of the need to look at areas such as atmospheric impact. We also obtain annual updated figures from every PPC permit holder, so part of my job is chasing those numbers and making sure we have them,” says Julie.

The data collected for each PPC pig unit includes:

* Pig capacity (based on minimum welfare standards);
* Production (number of pigs);
* Ammonia and methane emissions;
* Energy consumption (and renewables production);
* Water consumption;
* Waste production (including livestock wastes);
* Raw material consumption.

“We are also starting to build up data relating to water and soil quality round each unit – nitrates, ammoniacal nitrogen and orthophosphate,” she says.

Having one central point - Johnson Allan - co-ordinating the PPC information from Scotland’s pig producers means the sector has a consistent approach to the legislation. This has led to a good working relationship with SEPA, with regular meetings and the opportunity to discuss regulation changes or updates and how they might be interpreted.

“This means we can understand requirements and give help and guidance to producers, as well as preparing the industry for change.

“We also go along on site visits when SEPA is there if farmers ask us to, and again, this leads to a good, consistent approach. In some cases, it can avoid unnecessary capital expenditure if other producers are not required to implement similar solutions.”

Because Julie and her fellow director Elaine Johnson specialise in environmental consultancy, they have a wide range of contacts in the sector which helps in keeping up with latest developments. This is particularly useful where farmers have to use ‘Best Available Technology’ (BAT) to mitigate environmental risks.

A consistent way of implementing BAT throughout Scotland has led to a gradual improvement in environmental performance across the sector, she says. “Some BAT requirements are common sense, such as covering slurry stores, but some of the new technology can be very expensive. Our network means we also hear of new technology which is being used but is less successful, so we can let producers and SEPA know about the best, most practical options.”

The centralised approach also avoids the need for producers to individually employ and pay for specialists, for instance, for resource efficiency audits or emissions reporting, and means reporting is completed on time, which is crucial for compliance.

Timeliness is one of the areas which has sometimes proved a challenge, she adds. “It is sometimes quite hard to get relevant, accurate information for reports from operators on time. And the other issue is ensuring we are appraised of changes to sites before they are completed or installed – it’s much easier to advise when we are involved from the start!”

QMS pig specialist Allan Ward says he and Scotland’s pig producers appreciate being able to rely on a central, specialised, levy-funded resource for PPC. “They have great expertise, and it has also meant we have good discussions with SEPA where we are able to put forward any concerns. PPC is a minefield, and producers really value this approach.”

 **-ENDS-**

**What Johnson Allan does – funded by QMS:**

* Assists with PPC permit applications, variations, and surrenders;
* Provides practical site-specific advice including assistance with Best Available Technique (BAT), which is the requirement to use the best practical technique to minimise potential pollution;
* Keeps up to date with industry-wide research, plus assists with technologies and techniques relating to established BREF (Best Available Techniques Reference document) and knowledge transfer relating to reducing and monitoring emissions;
* Assists with related government consultations;
* Reports to and liaises with SEPA.