



Can having a BQP outdoor pig breeding unit on my farm benefit my business?



If you are unsure as to whether having an outdoor pig breeding unit on your farm would be a good move for your business then the story of Estate Manager Adrian Howes and GSK pigs (a 1000 sow BQP breeding unit) may help you make your decision...

Adrian Howes manages a 4,500 acres arable farm as part of an 8,000 acre estate near Fakenham in Norfolk. Adrian had been approached on a number of occasions about allowing outdoor pigs on the land but had not been tempted into allowing pigs onto the farm.



Guy King pictured alongside Adrian Howes (right)

The farm grows wheat, barley, rape and vining peas as its main crops and it also lets out land for root crop. The farm is in the HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) scheme. Much of the land is light, poor yielding and free draining, so after a couple of years of drought like conditions he decided to look at pigs again and made contact with BQP.

BQP discussed the production system that they operate with their breeding herd partners and the way they produced pigs for Waitrose. They then put Adrian in contact with Guy King of GSK pigs. After discussions on the farm Adrian and the estate's owner visited Guy's unit to see how it was managed and whether it would fit in with their farm's business plan.

They were very impressed with the way Guy operated his unit, the tidiness, attention to detail and the focus that was given to environmental issues. The land that is used for the pigs was initially assessed by an environmental consultant to ensure that the fields are managed in the most environmentally friendly way. This in itself is very important to such a large farm that is in HLS. Adrian knew from the start that the pigs would have no effect on cross compliance and his single farm payment.

Guy moved his 1,000 sow breeding unit onto the site in the Spring of 2011.

Adrian says "...by having the pigs on the land my yields have increased on the poorer land and greatly reduced the need for expensive compound fertilisers...it gives the farm a steady income and there is less risk to the business, it also means that we are less likely to be affected by changes in the market like cereal prices or weather conditions effecting yields".

"There is no noise, no mess, no smell and no flies. I hardly know that they are there" said Adrian.

"I have been really impressed by how little impact the pigs have had on soil structure yet they do a tremendous job removing weeds and volunteer plants such as potatoes".

Both parties are very happy with the arrangement that they have and are looking forward to the two businesses growing together.