Pig Virus Risk Could be Reduced by Trailer Heating Systems

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US - Several Ohio pig producers are among those throughout the US who are relying on a unique trailer heating system to reduce the risk of transmitting viruses during animal transport.

Every time hogs are transported, they are at risk for catching any viruses that may be lingering on the trailer's surface, reports Ohio's Country Journal (OCJ).

To address this tremendous challenge, Cooper Farms has installed two Bio-Dri units — one at its grow-out facility in Ft. Recovery and the other at its sow farms in Oakwood. The Bio-Dri system is a quick and thorough method for heating and drying livestock trailers after wash-down tohelp prevent the spread of swine viruses, such as porcine epidemic diarrhea (PED) virus.

Cooper Farms has 21,000 sows, weans over 550,000 piglets and raises over 148 million live pounds of pork each year.

"Several years back, we had an outbreak of PRRS (porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome)," said Dave Staugler, a Cooper Farms day manager. "We swabbed the trailers after they were cleaned and they came back PRRS-positive. After they went through our Bio-Dri, the swabs came back negative."

Because weather conditions and lack of downtime between loads can make adequate natural drying difficult, the Bio-Dri system, developed by Automated Production Systems (AP), is a dedicated structure that utilises high-volume, high-velocity blowers and gas-fired burners to deliver heated air to all parts of the trailer, inside and out. The heated air is recirculated through the system for maximum drying and fuel efficiency, and then purged from the chamber at the end of each drying cycle.

Currently, the heating and drying system is used about 15 times daily at the two Cooper Farms' two locations combined.

"Given the importance of protecting animal health during transport, Bio-Dri is one of our top biosecurity protocols, and it has proven very effective," Staugler said.

The structures are typically built on a producer's operation or at truck washes that service transport trailers. This past August, AP introduced an enhanced Bio-Dri II system with new, automated controls. Included are:

- Remote access — Producers can program operational parameters and monitor the process from off-site locations using their computer, smartphone or tablet.
- Modulating heat – Instead of the current high/low control, the new system allows for temperatures to be increased or decreased to meet specific requirements, reducing cycle time and increasing efficiency.
- Process verification – Once the drying process has been completed, verification will be automatically transmitted via text or email. The system will also record data relating to heating and drying time, temperature and other parameters.

"The Bio-Dri System has a proven track record in reducing the risk of introducing viruses and pathogens to pigs during transport in all weather conditions," said Brian Rieck, Product Manager for Illinois-based AP, which produces a full line of swine production equipment.

He told *OCJ*: "With its new, automated controls, Bio-Dri can be an even more effective tool in a swine producer's biosecurity protocols."

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