

# PIG industry news

A summary of news and practical ideas for the Australian Pig Industry

## SABOR highlights pig industry's progress

By DEANNA LUSH

**N**EW \$1 million facility at Sabor, Clare, has been operating for 12 months, housing an extra 200 boars and making it the largest pig AI centre in Australia.

### SABOR timeline

- **1986:** A central boar test station was opened to compare performance of boars under the same diet and environmental conditions. Pigs were slaughtered to assess performance.
- **1990:** SABOR started offering semen from boars, rather than slaughter because the same bloodlines were continually returning the best performance for natural matings.
- **1995:** Boars had been tested successfully for nearly 10 years but requests from farmers to have their own boars at stud resulted in establishing a contract collection service to generate funds.
- **1996:** The industry had been manually operating the AI collection centre but started to seek more information on how best to collect semen, what QA was needed and equipment and staff. To improve SABOR's performance, Alan Fyfe and Graeme Pope attended a Mini Tube seminar in Albury NSW which enabled SABOR to be fully automated and follow world's best practice.
- **Late 1990s:** SABOR became nationally renowned for its AI service and started AI training with the industry in other states and New Zealand.
- **2004:** An offsite quarantine shed was built to improve SABOR's biosecurity and increase numbers of boars.
- **2005:** SABOR became an independent, industry-owned facility and separated from the government.
- **2012:** SABOR began plans to create a new environmentally managed facility (see main story)

Tucked away in the hills of the Clare Valley, it is the only AI centre in the state and is the largest in Australia.

SABOR chairman Barry Lloyd says the facility reflects the progressive nature of the industry and its adoption of technology to maintain best practice.

"It's moved from being a low tech, low cost semen collector to where it is now, it uses the best of technology, about providing the best service it can to customers," he said. "The new shed means we are also putting importance on welfare. We are really trying to meet benchmark of welfare, quality, consistency, timeliness and reliability of semen delivered to farm."

"While breeders pay an agistment, collection and processing fee, any profit made is used to reinvest in the business. In the event there are surplus funds, they would be returned to the Pig Industry Fund."

SABOR has been managed by Graham Reu for the past 14 years. He says the new facility is a Spanish design but was modified to suit Australian conditions.

### They Said It

IN my 37 years in the industry, there are three things that have made monumental changes in how we manage pigs and the efficiency of the industry – the commercialisation of AI, batch farrowing which gives growth rate and health advantages, and the move back to pigs in shelters on straw, which we are now using for weaners and sows.

– Graeme Pope,  
Graeme Pope Consulting

ALAN has been a long standing member of the Pig Industry Advisory Group since it took over from the Swine Compensation Fund, of which he was also a founding

### Key points

- Facility reflects progressive nature of the industry
- Only Aust shed to have sawdust floor
- Profit made reinvested in business

It houses 200 boars in 6 square metre pens. It is the only shed in Australia to have a sawdust floor and is thermal controlled with auto-insulated blinds and fans in every corner. This keeps boars in maximum comfort at the optimum temperature to maximise semen quality.

The shed is tunnel ventilated, and fully automatic, including feeding, which is adjusted based on body condition.

"The sawdust compared to concrete has increased boar comfort which means they consume less feed and there are fewer leg injuries," Graham said.

"The sawdust floor is 25 centimetres deep, and every eight weeks the boars are moved out and the bobcats move in to clean it out. It is refilled with 300 cubic metres of sawdust, or three semi-trailer loads."

SABOR houses 200 boars in the new facility and 120 in the original shed. On arrival, boars spend six weeks in a nearby

member, many years ago. His wealth of knowledge on both current issues and of the history of the pig industry in this state has been an invaluable asset to the advisory group. His opinions and recommendations are always held in the highest of esteem and helped ensure that the advisory group focused on progressing our industry forward with strength.

– Jenny McMahon  
Pig Industry Advisory Group chair

SABOR has enabled us to have the ability to change our production methods and go to batch farrowing. By using AI, we have ready access to a whole multitude



**CUTTING EDGE:** SABOR chairman Barry Lloyd and manager Graham Reu inside the facility's 12-month-old, \$1 million investment in the semen collection centre near Clare.

quarantine station. This is separate from the AI sheds and provides a separate airspace to ensure there is no disease transfer.

Before boars are released to the main SABOR facility their health status has to be approved and written certification from the farm has to be received for the same six week period.

They are vaccinated and trained to jump a dummy sow.

Monday is the primary collection day, reflecting that most sows are weaned on Thursdays, and semen is collected from 130 boars by six people in the shed, four in the lab and three out on the road making deliveries.

About 5000 doses are collected a week, of which about 3500 is on Mondays.

• Details: Graham Reu 0427 842 628

### Alan remembers 28 years at helm

THE SABOR story highlights the pig industry's innovation and progressive history in South Australia.

Alan Fyfe retired from the SABOR board last year after 28 years of helping steer the facility, including as the inaugural chairman.

When Alan first started, SABOR was a boar testing facility with boars tested from 30kg to 90kg for growth weight, back fat and feed conversion on a property near Clare, which was bought using growers' money in the SA Swine Compensation Fund and administered by Minister of Agriculture.

But as the industry moved to batch farrowing and AI, it became to be a centre for distributing genes for superior boars.

The turning point was when SABOR started using Mini Tube – a German AI equipment company. This meant automating the entire process and achieving high standards of quality control, such as rather than hand-mixing extender from the basic ingredients they could buy it premixed in bulk.



**FACILITY OPENING:** Former Yelmah, Hamley Bridge, piggery principal Alan Fyfe (right), now of Nuriootpa, with Stockyard Industries' Marcus Jones, Toowoomba, Queensland.

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Boar of the Quarter