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## REAP WHAT YOU 'SOW' – DANISH LESSONS ON PIG PRODUCTION

A new report from Australian researcher and veterinarian, Dr Trish Holyoake, has found how one of the local pork industry's most important competitors, Denmark, continues to forge ahead with sow productivity.

The University of Sydney researcher is on study leave for four months in Denmark, where approximately 26 million pigs are produced each year – five times more than in Australia.

She said one of the day-to-day challenges for Danish producers is to ensure survival among the high numbers of piglets born, noting that with 13.5 piglets per litter, of which 11.6 make it to weaning, they have achieved high sow productivity.

“The average farm is rearing 25 weaned pigs per sow per year, compared to Australia's 21, but the low American dollar is making margins tight on the 90% of Danish produce that is exported and so the search for even more efficiencies continues.

“For example, they are now trying to establish whether piglets perform better when reared in litters of 11, 13 or 15,” Dr Holyoake said.

Pork CRC CEO, Dr Roger Campbell said he hoped the Danes' refined farming methods would provide valuable lessons for Australian producers.

“Denmark's success in producing four more weaned pigs per sow is one that we would like to emulate in Australia and that's a big reason why Dr Holyoake is there,” he said.

“Our analysis shows that if we could produce the same volume of pork per sow per year as Denmark, our efficiencies would be equal to the best in the world and better than the Danes.”

He noted that while increased sow reproduction would contribute significantly to Australian growth, a recent Pork CRC industry survey showed that it was also critical for Australia to lower its 70% sow turnover.

“University of Sydney research by Dr Yvette Miller, supervised by Dr Holyoake, has shown that when compared to gilts, older sows produce piglets with a higher birth weight and better post-weaning growth performance, underlining the importance of lowering sow turnover,” Dr Campbell said.

Dr Holyoake's primary research focus in Denmark is the diagnosis of diarrhoea in grower (>12 weeks old) pigs, particularly porcine circovirus type 2 (PCV2) and *Lawsonia intracellularis* ('ileitis').

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“Given the tight regulations on medication usage in pigs in this country, it is important to obtain the correct diagnosis of grower scour to minimise the over-use of antibiotics,” she said.

Dr Holyoake’s Denmark sabbatical is co-funded by the University of Sydney and Australian Pork Limited, with additional support from the University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Life Sciences and Danish Pig Production.

She is Principal Investigator on two currently funded Pork CRC projects, targeting improving the performance of gilt progeny and identifying on-farm risk factors for seasonal infertility.

[www.porkcrc.com.au](http://www.porkcrc.com.au)

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