We are delighted that the International Pig Veterinary Society Congress 2004, decided to select South Africa as the host country for the 20th IPVS Congress. The Pig Veterinarians of South Africa will ensure that this congress lives up to the best traditions of previous congresses; incorporating an interesting and topical scientific programme, fascinating accompanying persons tours and an excellent social programme, allowing delegates the opportunity to network with their overseas colleagues.

This, the first IPVS congress on the African continent, will undoubtedly be of enormous benefit in generating solutions to the emerging pig veterinary challenges, especially those related to exotic and changing viral diseases, decreased use of antimicrobials and nutritional advances. The congress is important to further pig veterinary science in South Africa, to encourage younger veterinarians to join the pig industry, as a vehicle to generate funds for research and to improve the pig industry in Southern Africa.

South Africa is a magnificent and beautiful country, and offers tourists value for money. Thus, pre and post congress tours will be a major attraction for delegates to come to South Africa. Durban, in KwaZulu Natal, is a vibrant multi-cultured city with magnificent beaches, easily accessible game parks, theme villages and a moderate winter climate making it an ideal tourist destination. We urge our colleagues throughout the world to use this opportunity to get a glimpse of the continent’s rich and fascinating wonders and to enjoy the hospitality of their African friends.

Dr Peter Evans
Chairman: Local Organising Committee: IPVS 2008
QUESTIONNAIRE ON BIOSECURITY IN FLEMISH PIG HERDS: DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

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Introduction
In Belgium, pig production is mainly concentrated in the northern part of the country (Flanders). This area is characterised by several densely populated livestock areas were good biosecurity measures are crucial to prevent introduction or spreading of infectious pig diseases. Biosecurity can be defined as the application of health controls and measures to prevent the introduction of new infectious diseases into herds and to avoid them spreading. In this abstract, a selection of results from a postal survey are described. Objective of the questionnaire was to measure present biosecurity in both professional and non-professional Flemish pig herds. The collected data will be used in a simulation model for analysis and prediction of disease spread.

Materials and Methods
In May 2005, 509 pig herds were administered a written questionnaire. Herds were randomly selected from an I-and R database. One month later a reminder was sent. Finally, non-participating holdings were contacted by telephone and asked whether they were yet willing to cooperate. The survey was closed in the month of August 2005. The questionnaire consisted of 10 pages with 86 items and was semi-closed. It covered several aspects regarding the degree of biosecurity and different types of contacts between farms.

Results and Discussion
Total response rate was 75.59%. Only results of farmers who were still active on the moment the questionnaire was taken, (n=352) are presented. The majority of corresponding swine farmers claim they are professional (92.6%), 36.7% of them exclusively produces pork.

Different biosecurity characteristics are presented in table 1 according to the herd size. A considerable number of corresponding farmers (19.3%) works besides their own farm also in other pig herds. This is an obvious risk, as disease transmission by persons between different herds can occur. The proportion of farmers active on more locations is higher for larger scale herds. Almost 24% of responding herds with less then 200 pigs are still feeding swill to their pigs. This result is astounding as swill feeding is strictly forbidden in Belgium. This illegal practice is mostly, although not exclusively, performed by non-professional (hobby) farmers. It can be estimated that these farmers are not aware of the ban of this activity.

In general, procedures for persons entering premises (i.e. reporting before entry, wearing of herd clothing, showering before entry, use of disinfection baths) are best applied in larger herds and less in smaller ones. Although the definition of the hygiene entry used in the questionnaire was rather broad, only on average 47.7% uses any form of hygiene entry. This illustrates that improvements in hygiene infrastructure are possible. Herd clothing for visitors is generally well applied. Similar trends according herd size were seen in internal biosecurity risks: most of the herds have a mortuary for carcasses and take measures against rodents. Insect control is apparently less important for responding farmers (on average 25.3% has no form of insect control).

Conclusions: By our knowledge, this is the first research on biosecurity that, besides professional farms, also includes on non-professional, smaller farms. This implies that the results of this questionnaire have to be interpreted with care as this survey was performed in a heterogeneous population. Although herd size is not necessarily connected with the risk of introduction or spreading of disease, certain management options and shortcomings regarding biosecurity are without any doubt linked with the herd size. Some stringent biosecurity measures are simply not applicable to small or hobby swine herds.

In general, it may be concluded that there is still room for several improvements both in small as large swine herds regarding biosecurity. Counselling of hobby farmers regarding legislation may certainly not be forgotten.

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