

Pigs Progress – Precision Livestock Farming on the move in the UK

Reading-based control equipment manufacturer Farmex has been involved with remote data capture from pig farms for over 15 years. In a collaboration with ARM Buildings Ltd and Dicam Technology Ltd the three companies have been funded by the Technology Strategy Board to develop new ICT tools to help pig farmers to become more efficient and sustainable. An exciting development within the project has been real-time measurement of growth using in-pen weigh scales which the group are calling “growth sensors”. The devices are freely available to the pigs in the pen and perhaps surprisingly the pigs seem very happy to use them – almost like a plaything. The challenge has been to minimise the electronics hardware on site by streaming raw data from the sensor onto the cloud using wireless technology. Once there, a sophisticated software algorithm filters the data to sort out valid readings from the large amount of data collected.

The results have been very promising and the group have already received a great deal of interest in the development from producers who are associated with the project. According to Hugh Crabtree, director of Farmex the goal now in the finishing herd is to deliver feed conversion and growth rate in real time.