



## HOSPITALITY

FOOD & BEVERAGE

### spoilt pig launches first Raised Without Antibiotics bacon to UK market

Welfare-led spoilt pig has launched the first Raised Without Antibiotics bacon to the UK market, rolled out across all multiple, convenience and online listings.

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The launch comes with a message of support from the Alliance To Save our Antibiotics. Jim Loescher, managing director of spoiltpig, states: 'The launch was born out of spoiltpig's concern regarding the global issue relating to antibiotic resistance and how farming impacts this. We believe in farming responsibly and always strive to do the right thing. That's why we are launching the UK's first Raised Without Antibiotics bacon and gammon range – easily identified by our blue Raised Without Antibiotics swing tag.'

Aled Rhys Davies of Pruex, a Hygiene optimisation consultancy (experts in the reduction of antibiotics in farming), says of spoiltpig's move to 100% Raised Without Antibiotics: 'The steps taken by spoiltpig are to be applauded as a lead response within the pig industry to the serious position we are in globally. As the WHO's first global report on antimicrobial resistance which focuses on antibiotic resistance, put it – this is no longer a prediction, antibiotic resistance – when bacteria change and antibiotics fail – it is happening right now, across the world and without urgent action we are heading for a post antibiotic era in which common infections and minor injuries can once again kill.'

Rhys Davies continues to explain: 'The problem is attributed to the over use of antibiotics in humans as the main cause to human bacterial infections; however the overuse of antibiotics in farming is also contributing to the issue. Within farming we know it is the pig industry that represents one of the biggest user of antibiotics, this is due to persistent routine usage to limit the effect of illness.'

spoiltpig, working with partners Brydock Farms, brings to market the first Raised Without Antibiotics bacon, building on the brands high-quality, high-welfare positioning. The farming system used to achieve this has been specially devised to ensure the pigs are not mixed in age; which avoids illness, to the extent that 85-90% of all the pigs reared to this system do not need to be administered antibiotic treatments (this system takes the principles of the benefits of a late weaning period to avoid illness and applies with a method that avoids inflating to organic



standard prices for consumers).

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics welcomes the spoilt pig/Brydock farms partnership introduction of higher-welfare Raised Without Antibiotics pig production and pork products for consumers. The initiative shows how major improvements in animal husbandry and welfare can greatly contribute to reducing farm antibiotic use, while still delivering affordable meat. The Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics hopes that the pig industry will learn from the new system which shows that responsible farming can both promote animal health and welfare and help protect the future of antibiotics.

Under the system, the piglets are farrowed outdoors and brought indoors at weaning age. They are then kept at low stocking densities, on deep-straw bedding and with natural ventilation. There is no tail docking or teeth clipping, practices which are still often practised routinely on a herd-wide basis on intensive pig farms. The Alliance believes that it is important to avoid weaning piglets too early because later weaning helps piglets develop greater immunity against disease and therefore reduces the need for antibiotics.

Good examples of late weaning are Swedish pig farming (average weaning age 35 days) and organic pig farming (average weaning age >40 days). On intensive farms, piglets can be weaned as early as 21 days, and the average weaning age in the UK is 26 days, whereas Brydock Farms wean slightly later at 28 days. Early weaning is stressful for piglets and associated with diarrhoea. Brydock Farms piglets often receive zinc oxide to control this problem, but the European Union is considering banning zinc oxide as a therapeutic feed additive due to its adverse environmental impacts and role in promoting antibiotic resistance. However, Brydock farms say they are already working to phase out zinc oxide in anticipation of the ban and have begun trials where the piglets are not fed zinc oxide.



[1] Under the new system, when required pigs do receive antibiotic treatment, usually on an individual basis. Treated pigs are then sold separately, but still under a Freedom Food label. In total, 85-90% of pigs raised receive no antibiotics.

[2] When kept indoors, the pigs are kept at stocking densities which are 15% lower than the maximum stocking density permitted under Freedom Food standards.

[3] The Alliance has issued this supportive statement because we feel confident that this company's approach to reducing antibiotic use involves improved husbandry and animal welfare. However, we are aware that some attempts to produce "antibiotic-free" meat, as manifested in some meat supply chains in the United States, can put animal welfare at risk when treatment is not provided in cases when it is needed. The Alliance does not endorse "antibiotic-free" intensive systems where animal health and welfare may be seriously compromised in this way. The term "antibiotic-free" may also mislead the consumer into thinking that the main problem with overusing antibiotics in livestock is the residues that end up in food, when in fact most scientific evidence suggests that it is primarily the spread of resistant bacteria on food or through the environment which is responsible for the transmission of resistance from farm-animals to humans.

spoiltpig Raised Without Antibiotics bacon is available in Dry Cured Smoked Back Bacon, Dry Cured Unsmoked Back Bacon and Dry Cured Smoked Streaky Bacon, from £3.00