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**Pork CRC Productively Enhancing Pig Welfare**

Appetite enhancers for weaners and enrichment blocks for gestating sows and weaners may soon be on the productivity improvement ‘menus’ for Australia’s pork producers.

According to Cooperative Research Centre for High Integrity Australian Pork (Pork CRC) Manager, Commercialisation and Research Impact, Charles Rikard-Bell, BEC Animal Nutrition will look to market the appetite enhancer in the first half of this year and commercialisation work for the enrichment blocks will continue throughout 2016.

A second commercialisation study on a novel appetite enhancer based on the ingredient preferences of weaned pigs was completed in January 2016.

Pork CRC, in conjunction with BEC Animal Nutrition and University of Queensland, has focused on producing commercial quantities of the appetite enhancer which would mix, transport and store easily.

With these refinements made, the enhancer was then tested on 21 day old weaned pigs for 28 days in commercial research facilities in Queensland.

“We found that piglets fed a simple, low cost weaner diet, plus the appetite enhancer, performed equivalent to piglets fed more complex, high cost diets, with or without the addition of the appetite enhancer,” Dr Rikard-Bell explained.

“We are also making inroads into developing enrichment blocks for gestating sows and weaned pigs and Pork CRC has now submitted an international patent application.”

A large commercial study on group housed sows was completed in January 2016, with preliminary results showing exciting outcomes.

“The prevalence of fresh scratch injuries significantly decreased on day three of mixing unfamiliar sows into group pens housed with either one or two enrichment blocks.

“Additionally, enrichment block treatments increased threat behaviour and it appears that this less aggressive, non-physical behaviour may be displayed as a way of guarding the supplement block when sows are being fed in pens fitted with head stalls,” Dr Rikard-Bell said.

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

Authorised by Pork CRC and issued on its behalf by

Brendon Cant, Pork CRC Communications Manager, Mob 0417 930 536.

**MEDIA CONTACT**: [Dr Roger Campbell](mailto:roger.campbell@porkcrc.com.au?subject=Media%20Release), Pork CRC CEO, Mob 0407 774 714.

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ATTACHED IMAGE:

**David Isaac BEC Feed Solutions Charles Rikard-Bell Pork CRC Tracy Muller Sunpork Farms.JPG:** Pork CRC Manager, Commercialisation and Research Impact, Dr Charles Rikard-Bell (centre) caught up with David Isaac, BEC Feed Solutions and Tracy Muller, Sunpork Farms, at the 15th biennial conference of the Australasian Pig Science Association in Melbourne.