



Peter Kjær Knudsen farms a total of 1,000 hectares of land together with his three sons. Photos: Colourbox.

by THEA KVIST FELDBAK

One vision, three sons, five parishes and five crops



A family of farmers from central Zealand has many irons in the fire.

Father and son – Peter and Kim Knudsen of Kirke Hvalsø in central Zealand – are presumably some of the biggest pig farmers in Denmark. Together, they produce around 75,000 finishers a year, with production distributed on several farms in the local area. In addition to a production of finishers and pigs, Peter Kjær Knudsen farms 1,000 hectares of land and does this together with his three sons, Kim, Anders and Knud.

“We farm all the land under different companies. We have five different crops, distributed in five different fields, each of which is roughly 200 hectares. And each field is located in a separate parish,” smiles Peter Kjær Knudsen.

Big effect from using Stalosan F

Over the years, a great many disinfecting and drying agents have been used in the herds’ many pens, but the Knudsens have always gone back to using Stalosan F.

“We have been using Stalosan F since 1986 and we still use it on a regular basis after every wash-down and disinfection process,” Peter Kjær Knudsen explains.

“We only use Stalosan F for finishers and, despite the fact that we wash down and disinfect the pens after each group of finishers, we can still see the effect of spreading Stalosan F before we let in the next group of pigs. That is true even if we only use it once. We do not go around spreading new Stalosan F into the pens and hence there must be some bacteria that we cannot keep under control unless we use Stalosan F. For instance we can see this in the fact that the pigs get off to a better start after transfer into the pen and that they do not have intestinal problems,” Peter Kjær Knudsen believes.



Milk cups are a brand-new initiative for the herd, and Peter Kjær Knudsen has high expectations for them. Archive photo.



At first glance, the pens resemble climate-controlled pens due to the low equipment. The equipment is provided by Big Dutchman.



The large window sections along the roof ridge allow sufficient daylight into the barn.



Peter Kjær Knudsen is pleased with using Stalosan F, and he has been ever since he started to use it back in the 1980s.



The new pig barn on Kim Kjær Knudsen's farm

“We tried to refrain from washing, and only spread Stalosan F between the groups of pigs, but this was unfortunately not enough to keep out salmonella, so we cannot omit the washing and disinfecting processes,” Peter Kjær Knudsen says.

“It’s a little difficult to quantify the effect of Stalosan F, but the present pig mortality rate in the finisher unit is 1.5–2%, but there were undoubtedly more deaths during the periods when we stopped using it,” Peter Kjær Knudsen says.

Setting up milk cups

Milk cups are now a new feature in all the pigsties and the Knudsen are very optimistic for this new initiative.

“After only three months of using the system, we can see results improving in the farrowing unit. Previously we put out sows with 14 piglets and would have around eight foster sows per weekly group of 45 sows. Now we put them out with 16 piglets and are having only two foster sows. At the same time, the weaning weight has risen by one kilo per piglet and we are now weaning 15.6 piglets per litter. In the last few weeks, we added 37.8 piglets per sow year, with 28 nursing days, so now we are interested in seeing whether the good results follow the piglets all the way out to the finisher unit, and whether we can eventually see an improvement from using the milk-cup system,” informs Peter Kjær Knudsen.

Construction of a new barn

At present Peter’s son, Kim Kjær Knudsen, is in the midst of a large innovative construction project that is expected to be completed in mid-June. The new unit will house 5,300 pens and it is characterised by being designed to be very energy efficient. The unique features of the unit include the ventilation system, extraction system

and light valves. The pens are made with 25% solid flooring under which channels with underfloor extraction are installed.

The barn is very wide, measuring 52 x 92 metres, and is made up of eight sections.

The new unit will have an open-barn event on 19 June from 10 am to 3 pm.



Looking across the barn with walkways, which subdivide the barn into sections.