Wayland Farms, a division of Cranswick PLC, has a 10,000-sow breed-to-finish operation. It has seen antibiotic consumption fall by 66% since 2015 – the outcome of a strategic health plan managed through staff training and skills development, on-going veterinary support from Oakwood Veterinary Group and Integra Veterinary Services and knowledge exchange between industry organisations and producer groups. The company has also been involved in a PhD study on AMR at Queen’s University, Belfast.

It has restructured its outdoor-based breeding pyramid to create a secure, closed breeding programme that reduces the risk of diseases entering its breeding population. It has also introduced a rigid, two-site, all-in, all-out rearing system throughout its rearing/finishing operation – a strategy that is bringing health benefits. All piglets are vaccinated against viral diseases at weaning and then batch reared in ‘field nurseries’ to 35kg liveweight. All housing (tents) and equipment is cleaned, disinfected and rested for five days between batches. Routine disease surveillance is standard, with regular blood samples taken from young pigs to monitor diseases like PCV2, EP, PRRS and APP. No in-feed medication is used, with treatment administered when groups require it strategically via drinking water using controlled dosing devices.

Mr Hooper said PRRS control should be a priority. “This ubiquitous virus triggers so many other diseases that often require antimicrobial treatment, so producers should consider this within their antibiotic reduction strategies,” he said.

These observations show how PRRS virus can be implicated in other disease syndromes, such as Glassers and actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae (APP), and how controlling it effectively can also improve rearing herd health and performance.

Mr Hooper said PRRS control should be a priority. “This ubiquitous virus triggers so many other diseases that often require antimicrobial treatment, so producers should consider this within their antibiotic reduction strategies,” he said.

The company was highly commended in the farm and agriculture category, which was won by Bristol University vet school’s AMR Force, which works across the industry to influence how antimicrobials are used in the livestock sector.

Charles Bowes, Wayland’s operations director, said it was satisfying to see the farming industry publicly acknowledged for the significant advances it is making.

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The business is also exploring the use of novel nutritional products, such as lauric acid (coconut oil), for their gut and intestinal health properties.