



## CASE STUDY - PIGS

**David Soutar believes the difference the buildings have made to his farm is remarkable, not just to the animal side of the business but also to the arable, as bringing the sows indoors has freed up 65 acres of valuable arable land.**

It's great, isn't it...pigs running around in the fresh air on a nice sunny day! But what about when it's windy and wet and there are jobs to do – like serving sows! It's not so good then, especially for the stockmen and women. The job can be hard enough at the best of times, let alone in adverse conditions.

That, though, is a thing of the past for David Soutar and the staff of the Strathmore Farming company, at Glamis, Forfar - thanks to the installation of two Roundhouses.

Before the buildings arrived in 2009 the farm had an outside AI service area typical of many outdoor units. Although breeding performance on the 680 sow Freedom Foods accredited herd was pretty good they naturally had no control of the weather, and Mr Soutar admits that it was difficult to get people to work outside and maintain a high degree of attention to detail. He saw the Roundhouse, and believed it would help.

"I originally saw the building at the Royal Highland Show in 2009, and liked what I saw," he says. "I looked at it for finishing pigs to begin with, but then thought it could solve our dry sow problems. I could see that it would allow us to get better control of our breeding, and that it would do a lot for staff morale as well," he adds.

Each of the two Roundhouses hold around 245 animals, and the animals stay in for 5/7th of the annual pig cycle, and are outside for farrowing and rearing for 2/7ths of the time.

The difference the buildings have made to the farm has been remarkable, he says. The number of pigs has increased by three to four pigs per sow per year, and conception rates of the young herd are 85%, although not all of the credit for this can be laid entirely at the doors of the Roundhouse (if it had any). Other changes have also been introduced as well, such as a change in breed to a Landrace cross Large White.

But Mr Soutar believes that the better working environment offered by the Roundhouse means his staff are doing a much better job of serving the sows, and the stress-free nature of the building is also playing its part in the improvement. And the arable side of the business has benefitted too – bringing the sows inside has freed-up 65 acres of valuable arable land.

"The buildings make everything much easier, the working environment is far more pleasurable and performance has improved on the farm" says David.

"The buildings have been great, and I'm very pleased with them. Sometimes we need to put up some square bales as shelter from the prevailing wind, but it's only on the bad days for a bit of extra protection. We've had some hefty gales as well, but have had no issues. I doubt we would have stayed in pigs if we hadn't have built them," he concludes.

