

PIC® matters

The PIC UK-Newsletter

Freneystown: The latest addition to PIC's Elite Farm System

PIC delivers genetic improvement with continued expansion

In May 2020, 1,000 gilts and boars traveled with first-class treatment onboard a Boeing 747 from the U.S, landing safely in Dublin, Ireland. They were heading to Freneystown in the Irish countryside, home to Hermitage Genetics' flagship farm. These animals are some of the most productive in the world, and will form the elite population of the latest addition to PIC's elite farm network – Freneystown.

Elite farms have a special place in PIC. The first elite farm was established in 1962 in Fyfield Wick, Berkshire England. Since then, over 15 elite farms have been added in Europe, North America and Brazil. Apex (where the Freneystown stock came from) in South Dakota (USA) and Aurora in Saskatchewan (Canada) are globally recognized today as sources of the best available genetics.



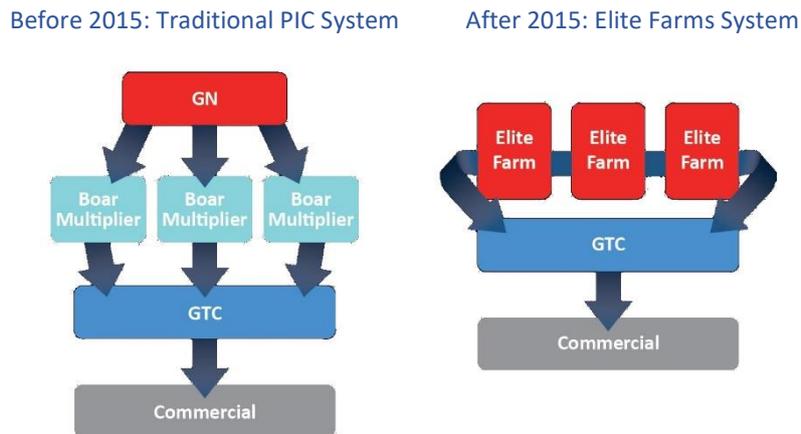
*PIC's first elite farm in 1962 in Fyfield Wick, England (left),
and the newest edition, Hermitage Genetics' flagship farm in Freneystown, Ireland (right).*

PIC elite farm's main goal is to drive and effectively disseminate genetic improvement. Pigs with the highest genetic potential are produced in these farms and shipped around the globe.

Expanding the Elite Farm System

The traditional pig breeding pyramid model provides an easy-to-understand pig flow and concentrates genetic improvement investments in a few places. However, this model also has inefficiencies. It physically limits the population size of each line, a key factor for the rate of genetic gain, and it creates a delay for countries to receive the genetic improvement.

To address the inefficiencies, PIC adjusted its Elite Farm system in 2015. They moved from a genetic nucleus system centered around two farms to a group of Elite Farms that drive genetic improvement together. PIC added Elite Farms across the globe that are now directly linked with each other through semen and live animal shipments. This link creates a larger elite population that allows PIC to increase selection intensity and accelerate genetic gain. It enables more direct shipments from Elite Farms to PIC customer farms and Gene Transfer Centers (GTC), reducing genetic delay (“genetic lag”) for customers.



PIC shifts from traditional genetic nucleus system to an Elite Farm system

Farm feature: Freneystown, Kilkenny, Ireland

Freneystown is the latest addition to the Elite Farms and provides a new source for high-value maternal and terminal genetics. The addition of Freneystown enables PIC to enhance product competitiveness and provides producers in Europe and across the globe more access to the best genetics in the PIC system.

Hermitage Genetics and PIC entered a strategic partnership in 2017. Freneystown, a farrow to finish farm with a 1,200 sow capacity, served as the principle genetic nucleus of the Hermitage Genetics breeding system. Their breeding system consists of Freneystown, Muckalee sire line nucleus unit (550 sows), Callan gene transfer center (500 boar GTC) and dedicated quarantines for receiving and exporting animals. Over the last 29 years, Freneystown animals shipped across all corners of the world, including the USA, Russia, China and South East Asia.

“2020 will see the completion of the PIC restocking of Hermitage Farms Ltd” says Ned Nolan, owner of Hermitage Genetics. “I’m enthusiastic that the PIC product portfolio, which now populates the Hermitage breeding system, secures the future role of continuing to provide producers across the globe with the highest quality genetics.”

Historically, the demand for breeding stock from Freneystown was driven by the quality of Hermitage Genetics’ breeding stock and by various geographical factors. Being an island without a feral pig Pig Improver PIC.com population, Ireland is an attractive area for raising high-health breeding stock. Also, Ireland is favorable for exports with good global trading relationships and excellent infrastructure, including options to export with ferries or air shipments through international airports.

Hermitage Genetics is known for its excellent breeding practices. Running an Elite Farm requires a unique skill set and a stringent focus on health and biosecurity. When Hermitage Genetics joined forces with PIC, the PIC team was very impressed by the high standards of the Freneystown team. Under the leadership of Ned Nolan and team, they implemented a meticulous breeding and selection program.

The team is laser-focused on the customer too. They thrive on exceeding customer expectations with high quality animals selected that are delivered effectively and efficiently to ensure customer success.

“It was an easy choice to reach out to Ned to convert Freneystown into an Elite Farm,” says Nick McCulley, PIC’s global supply chain director. “The attractiveness of Ireland for global export, the quality of the farm, and the operational excellence of the Hermitage staff made the decision easy. Along with that, we deeply value the partnership we have had with the Hermitage team over the last three years.” Freneystown will drive genetic improvement, improve dissemination of high-health breeding stock, and support PIC’s growth ambitions in Europe and globally. To meet this goal, PIC and Hermitage have invested in increased biosecurity, testing equipment and are populating the farm with the highest quality genetics in the PIC system for both its maternal and terminal lines. Currently, the gilts and boars are in quarantine and the first breeding stock is expected to be shipped to customers in the spring of 2021.