Interview with Zoe (pseudonym), animal technician

14th March 2022, in-person at participant’s place of work.

Conducted by researcher [K].

K: Can you tell me why you got involved in this career?

P: I just had an interest in animals, basically. I love animals and did an animal management course at college. Three years. And then we had to do work experience, I did work experience at [redacted], Pharmaceutical company. And I don't know why, but I just didn't realise that they had animals for some reason. Just didn't even think about it. And I was like, no, of course they have animals. So, I worked there for a while, and I just absolutely loved it. I loved the science. I thought it was so interesting and I worked with dogs at the time, so it was really lovely and rewarding. Just working with dogs every day. So that's how I got into this specific industry, the research industry and then over time I've ended up here. I've worked with small animals mainly. But yeah, dogs and primates as well. And after a while I think I worked with rodents for like 5 years. Yeah. So, after that I wanted to change direction and go into larger animals. And after five years working with rodents, I decided that I kind of had enough and I want to move into larger animals. This job came up and it was, yeah, farm livestock. I didn't necessarily think, yeah, I'm working with pigs, it was just, yeah, I'm working with farm livestock. And then over, I've been here for nearly seven years now and ended up working with more and more with pigs and become and became so much more interested in pigs over anything else. Just I don't know, I just seemed. I feel like I picked up on their well-being like and their behaviours really quickly, without much training, really, and I worked with large, adult pigs. Yeah, just because it just felt quite natural, and I just seemed to pick out like their personalities really quickly. So, I think that's probably, the main reason I got really into pigs was because I looked after that small herd of pigs

K: yeah, and what is it about pigs that makes it easy for you to understand them?

P: I think they’re actually quite similar to humans in a lot of ways 'cause they are. I think each of them are unique, especially when they're fully grown, and they develop their personalities. They just, i don't know. I don't know if it's... A lot of people say about their eyes. The eyes are quite human, could they are the same as ours in terms of their appearance. But yeah, I think just because I got to know each of those pigs, 12 adult pigs, females. I got to know each of these pigs. I was the one that looked after them all. I did a lot of sampling with them, and I ended up doing lots of training. I just got really into trying to improve their welfare. So, I just think I found it quite rewarding because these pigs, they're the ones they were in the control blood group. And at the time they didn't, they weren't allowed outside or anything like that, didn’t have access to the field. so, I worked on making that happen which is really nice and it's just really rewarding actually like making that happen and then letting them outside. Just all that work, you know?

K: That must have been nice.

P: It was really nice.

K: How did you make that happen?

P: Erm, I spoke to the NVS about it and another vet who was here. And he kind of said that there's no reason why they can't go out in the field, and I didn't realise. I think I just thought, well, they're inside. Like, yeah, there here for research. Their life span is quite short it's kind of like that's it… but he opened my eyes a bit and said, actually they can. Then I was like, well that is it. Then I'm making that happen. If they can have that, then they absolutely should have that. Yeah. So, I just worked on initially getting the small paddock ready for them to go out and then I made a bigger, larger paddock in the field. I think I had the whole field to start off with.

K: Were you able to see them go out there for the first time?

P: Yeah! I got all the electric fencing ready and, yeah, it was so nice. We were able to open the doors and let them out. You think like they were all going to be, like, super excited and like, go running across the field. But they didn't. They were really like, cautious. Like I say, they only had this first smaller paddock to start off with. Obviously, they had not experienced an electric fence before so that wasn’t nice for them but yeah eventually, they got over it then, I think there's only one pig that took a little while to kind of get out. but yeah, it was just a gradual thing, and they all loved it in the end and the grass soon turned to just mud!

K: And did you have experience with pigs beforehand?

P: None. No, we did have pigs at college, but we didn't do anything hands on with them. we didn't learn specifically about them so nothing really.

K: What have you learned about pigs from being here?

P: Everything. So how to look after them, their behaviours. You know, just the fact that they are all quite unique. And they all have their different personalities. They have, like, you know, they favour different things. All sorts of things like enrichment or whatever and treats. I learned about their anatomy and how that plays into how you look after them. And then from the sampling side, I can blood sample them I can do swabbing and things like that.

K: what do you mean about the anatomy and how you care for them?

P: The pigs that we have here, the larger breeds. So, when they're older because of the way that they're built, obviously they're quite heavy, but then they have these tiny little legs and these little trotters. So that can cause them, you know, I feet problems, they can get lame like I say, like this is when their adult obviously. Yeah. So that was quite a big part. I'd have to add like biotin into their diet and things like that to help them. Obviously, you know, if they were lame, I have to keep them inside, give him like a really nice big bed of straw, things like that. Yeah, obviously. The nose is like a massive erm, I don’t know the correct terminology, but they have like an amazing sense of smell and their noses just very strong and obviously use it a lot when they like forage, things like that. I guess that's kind of behaviour as well, but it still key in looking after them, you need to provide them lots of bedding and different enrichment to keep them from being bored. Yeah. Another thing that I had to keep a check on was their skin, when they're older their skin would get quite dry, and being in the sun all day, and if they were younger pigs, they were sensitive to getting sunburn. It was suggested that you could put sun cream on them, but I didn't really think that was necessary as I felt like pigs in the wild are fine. You know, pigs on commercial farms are fine, you know, not every pig is housed inside. So, we would make like wallows for them outside in the summer like every few days we'd just run a hose out into the wallows make sure there's enough water there so they can have a mud bath and you know get caked in mud, and this is like natural sun cream isn't it, just blocks the sun.

K: What is it like working with pigs compared to those other animals you worked with?

P: There's just so much more interaction. You build up, like a bond, you build a bond with them. You have this level of trust. They have to trust in you, and they definitely know different people. They can recognise different people.

K: so how would you describe a pig to never met a pig?

P: kind of weird looking! They’re very unique, super unique animals. Just say that actually they can look really intimidating and scary, particularly when they're bigger. As long as you treat them with respect. And you try and build up almost like a friendship, build up the bond with them. That they're not scary and it can be really rewarding to work with them. And obviously, you know, they have these have these big sharp teeth, but very unlikely that they're going to use them. They just want to come over and like, say hello there, just really inquisitive animals more than anything, but definitely not scary.

K: You say respect them, do you think respect is quite big part of the care here?

P: it’s key really in how you look after them. I think if you don't, if you don't have any respect for an animal, I don't see how you can properly give them the care that they deserve and need. So as long as you have respect for them and the fact that they are individual, even though they, you know, generally have the same needs, but at the same time they can be quite individual. Yeah, respect that. They're not the same as every other farm livestock animal species, so they're all different.

K: So, what is your daily routine with the pigs?

P: Well, nowadays I don't work too much with pigs when it comes to husbandry. I'm kind of building officer for a building that houses cattle. I guess I'm a grade higher and we have we have lots of Animal techs here that do the husbandry work. When my building is open, I'm in there a lot of the time, people kind of have their roles. While my building is shut, I kind of just fill in the bits that need to catch up on, so I don't really have much to do with pigs on a day-to-day basis. But I do a lot of the sampling. Generally, I don't do it day to day anymore. I used to do it all the time. Everyday.

K: Do you miss it?

P: I definitely miss the old girls like the big girls as they’re known. But none of them are here anymore. But that was definitely, I'd say that was my favourite. My favourite time whilst I've been here, my favourite memory. But I definitely would work with that group again, like the new group. More than happy, like I would more than happily go and work with pigs every day. Yes, it's just not part of my routine anymore.

K: how is this space here kind of designed for pigs? I mean this one was for cattle, right?

P: I’d say that the flooring is not ideal. You know it's fine, it's fine because they're not here forever. Yeah, but I think, I mean, it's better than like, you know, that horrible kind of slatted floor that you can find in some commercial pig farms. But yeah, I think it’s fine for what we’ve got. We’ve added things in too.

K: What kind of things have you added in?

P: Nothing like major, just little things like adding hooks on to walls so that you can right hang a piece of enrichment up or something like that. Yeah, obviously, like I said for the blood control group, for them to have access to the field, putting up electric fencing and things like that.

K: and how would you describe kind of the general approach to care here?

P: Very good. Everyone here cares a lot for animals. I'd say that the culture of care is quite high generally. And I say that people do naturally have a respect for animals. I guess it's one of those industries that, you know, if you didn't love animals, you probably wouldn't work with them. Yeah, I don't think I've throughout my whole 11-12 years of working with animals, I haven't really come across too many people that have come across like they aren’t that bothered. But in terms of like, you know, policies and things like that, we have so many courses that we do. They've tried to put on like workshops before. I say people generally are really interested. You know, there's like this enrichment plan going on in one of the buildings at the moment, so new people always trying to improve things. If they can. You know there's a budget for like enrichment and for food like for food enrichment like vegetables and stuff like that. So, I do think the standard is quite good here.

K: Do you find there are any challenges to providing the care you’d ideally like to?

P: Having the environment that is the most appropriate for them. Like I say, the flooring, I think the flooring is the main problem. Again, it's more going to be for the adult pigs. I guess just having like the most up to date kind of equipment available. Having things like technology involved. I'm sure there is so much technology out there nowadays that you could use to kind of track pig behaviour and just like you know, I mean like CCTV and all sorts of things like that. So, I think if we could, if we had more of a budget to do things like that, I think we definitely would. But as I said, I think you know as it is now, I do think it's fine. I think it's good and I think it is balanced between being practical, you know, applying the science and also caring for them and looking after their welfare I think we've found a good balance

K: do you sometimes find there are trade-offs in doing that?

P: I’d only say like that, you know, things like blood sampling is not nice. It's obviously a stressful thing for pigs and it's not nice for anyone that's involved because obviously pigs are like screaming, they're very vocal. You're essentially restraining an animal against its will, and it's just not nice to do that thing. We all accept that, like it must be done. We've looked at other ways of doing it and there really isn't any other way of doing it just because of their strength, their size. Obviously, you have to keep very still, so it is really unfortunate that there isn't anything else it can be done, but none of us like it. I wouldn't say anyone actually enjoys doing it, so I'd say that is a definite trade off like I think you just accept that. We can’t do it any other way and the science needs to be done.

K: how would you describe the relationship you have with the pigs?

P: each group is different. like I say coz I'm not, I'm not doing the husbandry so often, but I do, I think I do still find that if I ever did need to do some husbandry that I do just slip back into how it how I used to be. Just sort of being very aware of the and aware of their needs. And I like, I do like to get down and sort of interact with them. And I have to play with them and scratch them and things like that. And even though I know that realistically you're not going to build up any kind of bond with them Cos they're not here long enough, I think it's still nice to show them that people can be trusted. You got to build something up whilst you’re here, start to build it at least. So yeah.

K: How do you think the pigs could see you in that way? How do they see their relationship with you?

P: I think probably just, I think I would hope that they would think that they can trust us or trust me. You know, then they’re not scary, they're gonna come and feed me. They're gonna come and give me a scratch. They're not gonna hurt me. You know, even though blood sampling them is effectively hurting them, doing something against their will, they seem to forget it really quickly. They seem to almost instantly forget that what you've just done to them. I guess it's kind of like dogs, like they just seem really keen to kind of have that affection from you.

K: might your relationship change with, say if you are overseeing a group of pigs for a particular research project or something? How would your relationship change with them as the research progresses?

P: oh, I think just recognising that individual personalities and even behaviours, you know? If we've got to do something, you've got to sampling or whatever. If we got to take the temperatures or something you just, you would just pick up on like the ones that are completely fine with it and the ones that are a bit maybe a bit skittish. So, you've got to spend more time with them, ones that just absolutely won't let you do it. and you will just have to restrain them. Yes, I think just recognising individual personalities. Yeah, just picking up on their needs, really. Just getting to know them.

K: How do you think you can make it as pleasant as possible to do those kinds of things like sampling and temperature taking?

P: So, you can't just go in and clean out and feed them, like you do have to get down on the floor and you do you have to give him a scratch and you know, talk to them, things like that and just interact with them. You've got to you have got to start building something up with them. And I think when you do that, it creates positive interaction, and I would say that that decreases stress levels massively. You know, a pig is not going to let you essentially put a thermometer up it’s bum if it thinks that you're a predator, that you that you can't be trusted, that you're gonna do something to hurt them. They only allow you to do that because you started building this kind of friendship up with them.

K: And if you could, do you think you could adapt the research process to make it more pleasant for the pig?

P: getting them in earlier would be good. Getting them in a few weeks earlier. Putting more emphasis on training, on bonding with them, include that in the amount of time that it takes to do the husbandry. Yeah, yeah, I think it would, having like specialised units would be amazing, which is you know, definitely not going to happen because we need to consider the fact that there are other species here. But you know, in a dream world having pens that are perfect for them, perfect for their anatomy and also the availability of outside space. That would be ideal.

K: So more naturalistic settings?

P: That would be amazing yeah.

K: And how do you identify if a pig is distressed or in pain?

P: Well, other than the wailing… does help when you're with them every day because you obviously recognise the behaviours and you can quickly pick out a pig that's not very well, you know, if pigs not eating then there is 100% something wrong. That’s probably the worst thing if a pig stops eating, you know something's really wrong, but generally if it's kind of not playing, not sticking with its group, not really interacting, just kind of on its own in the corner, just a bit. Almost like it looks a bit kind of looks a bit sad. Obviously, it's not sad... but the kind of behaviour that is showing it's like you know, I mean I think it's not, it's not interested anything. It's like it looks so it looks depressed. not in an emotional sense, but yeah.

K: Ok, like just isolated?

P: Yeah

K: ok and how does it make you feel if you do perceive one of the pigs you're caring for to be distressed or something?

P: mean, obviously I hate it. It I guess it just.... How would you describe it, like it's almost like an intuition just kind of kicks in that you have to do something, you have to find out what's going on you have to check the pig over, make sure it's okay you have to go and get a vet, you just wouldn’t let it go until that pig was being treated and it was going to be okay. Yeah, I guess it's just that kind of caring responsibility that you naturally have when you look after animals.

K: Do you think you’re normally able to mitigate their pain or distress?

P: I mean, not me, I wouldn't personally. I would obviously call a vet and then they would probably administer some sort of treatment. Yeah, painkiller. You know, I'd look at the environment and see if there was something I could do. Maybe I could give them a bigger bed or something if it was injured or I could alter its diet if it might need it. Yeah. Just if there was any way that we could alter it to make that pigs live more comfortable.

K: And have there been times where there have been unexpected deaths?

P: Yeah. Well, I don't know if I can recall… I don't think I've ever found a dead pig. But I've seen pigs being sampled and they've died afterwards, and it's usually because they’ve had a heart attack because of how stressful it is. And it's horrible. It is really horrible, saying that I have only seen it a handful of times. Yeah, it’s not nice.

K: How does that make you feel when they can’t make it to the end of a trial or whatever it might be?

P: I guess I think ultimately. I don't actually think about it like that. I don't really think about them and the science or anything. Obviously no, it's important. You know, it’s important to us. You know the technologists that we do the schedule that we do everything as we should and we get to the end, but I don't think of it from, I guess for the pig. You know, I just think it's sad that the pig is dying and not in a very nice way.

K: So, what will happen towards the end of the trial with these pigs?

B: So, they'll be taken to the [postmortem] room. They have like their final [blood] samples taken up here, either on the day or day before, not sure of the schedule. Then they will be killed, and yeah, have their tissues taken, and that will be it.

K: So, are you not involved in the culling at all?

B: No. No, like we have a whole post mortem team that does all that. We're not trained up here to be able to kill large animals, but I have, I have said in the past that if there was training available, I would happily do it because I've been in situations where an animal has been dying and it would, I think it would have been nicer to be able to just put it down rather than having to call out the vet, wait for them to get here, sort out all the drugs and everything for that to get here. I'm experienced enough to be able to recognise when a pig is not going to recover, or any animal. Yeah. So, I think being able to put an animal down when it is suffering, I think it's important you know here.

P: So, you would like more ability to be able to make those decisions?

B: Yeah. Yeah, I think obviously we're not vets, we are not trained in that way. We just work with animals. We just do the husbandry. We can do some regulated procedures but, I think there's lots of people here that would say that they would know when an animal is not going to recover, you just know.

K: So, for a lot of the pigs here the trials require that you need to have a post-mortem to get the tissues. Is there any other instances where you don't need that, and the pigs don’t have to be culled? I’m interested to see about the possibilities for alternative endings to the research process, I know rehoming is done elsewhere with other smaller animals. Is anything like that done here?

P: No, I don't think there’s ever been an instance where we are allowed to rehome pigs. I don't think there has ever been a study which didn't require something at the end. I think it's only ever been horses and ponies that have been able to be rehomed. Which is a shame. I guess if it's an option I'm sure we will allow it to happen, but I guess at the same time, the pigs that come in there, they've been bred to be slaughtered ultimately. They're going to be grown into nearly full size, to be carted off and killed for meat. So, either way. They would be killed for us really, they wouldn't necessarily be going off to a nice rescue home. I think I think it's just not really something that would ever be done. It's really sad, but I guess people don't see pigs in that way.

K: how do you think people do see pigs?

P: I think as food. I mean, that's why there are so many commercial pigs. That’s what it’s for ultimately. For food and for by-products.

K: And do you think the fact they are used for food means the public are more likely to accept them as animals in research?

B: Yeah, I think so. Yes, definitely. Not me personally, because I don't actually eat meat. But yeah, I think so. There is uproar if there is the thought of using a horse for meat, it’s just like the... It's like the kind of the social construct of what's acceptable and what's not acceptable to know what I mean, like cows and pigs and sheep are food, horses aren’t food. Even though they are in some countries, like in England, it's not done here. So yeah, definitely I would say there is more acceptance there.

K: Yeah. Do you come across any challenges in talking to people outside of the research world about your job?

P: Erm, I never have a problem with it, I am always kind of open talking about it, I generally kind of test the waters first. If someone said, “what do you do?” I say I work on the farm and then most people are like “cool, so like with pigs and sheep and stuff? what do you do?” I’ll say, well, you know, just clean out. And I look after them and stuff like that. And then usually that's the end of it. But some people ask like “But why they there? What are you doing with them?” Then I'll be like, oh, OK, so we can talk a bit more about it. depends. I wouldn't willingly be like “I work with pigs and their research done and they’re killed at the end”. I mean, I wouldn't really just say that like almost saying like in a proud way. I don't think I've ever said it in like a... not necessarily a proud way, but more of a way that I am accepting that it's an important part of this industry and it's important for the country. Ultimately their sacrifices are protecting other animals in the country and potentially around the world. So, it’s not nice that we have to do things like that, but ultimately, I think if you want to protect animals from disease and make sure people and animals have good lives then you just need to accept that that is the way it is.

K: Do you think the pigs here generally have good lives?

P: Yeah, definitely. you know, sometimes they get blood sampled, and that's probably the worst thing that they have to go through in general. They have great life. They've got, they live with all their friends. They get fed twice a day, they have free access to clean water, a really good bed. They get a lot of enrichment and people that are loving and caring. So yeah, I do think they have a good life.

K: so, when they are taken to the post-mortem, how does that make you feel?

P: I think you get desensitised to it overtime. I think it's harder. It's harder when people have been there for a long time, so it is definitely harder with the with the adult girls that have been here for a good few years.

K: What were they used for?

P: So, they were just clean pigs, they would be used for blood, which would be used as like control right against whatever they were using it for. So yeah, they just get last sampled. But yeah, that I mean, that's harder. See you get to know them. You know their personalities, so it's more difficult. Um. Yeah, but I wouldn't say that I actually get upset anymore. I don't even know if I ever really been like, that upset. I think just after years of working in this industry, you just get used to it. You accept that’s it. Yeah. Kind of just get on with it. Maybe it’s kind of better to not have those feelings in some way.

K: do you think it makes you a better carer for those animals?

P: I don't know that makes any difference. I think I would look after them exactly the same whether they were going to be killed or not. I mean, since they weren't going to be killed then I'd probably make more effort in looking after their welfare in the long term. Thinking of the long term rather than just short term. But I don't think it would change how I feel about their wellbeing.

K: the control group of pigs. When do they reach a point where they have to be killed?

P: It would normally be if their leg problems were not getting better, and if they couldn't be treated anymore. If it was constant kind of treatment, because for that research, they couldn't have painkillers, they couldn't be used for blood samples for a month or something after taking them, I can't remember. and then also if they got so big, if they got really fat. Obviously, they carry That around their necks. If you couldn’t get a blood sample because their ne sck was so thick, then They don't have a use anymore. So, it is either, yeah, health problems or you can't get a sample anymore.

K: So, are they kind of killed individually rather than a group at a time?

P: Yeah

K: do you have control pigs at the moment?

P: yeah. There was four. There may be some new ones as well.

K: So, a key thing of what I'm trying to do is think about how we can make research better for animals, how we might think about things like consent. obviously, we can't ask animals whether they would like to be blood sampled or whatever, but I wondered if you could share some insights about whether you feel you know if a pig is maybe more willing to do things or not?

P: Yeah. Yes. Um. I'm not sure, I mean obviously there were the pigs that were really averse to it and Some would just happily accept that there was going to be a treat at the end. like if they go into the holding pen, they might get a treat. So, I think some of them would willingly go into it thinking about the food. Maybe they are giving consent because they're getting something in return. but there are definitely others that you know are just not interested even if food is on offer. So, I guess in that way kind of.

K: right okay. I’m also thinking about building mutual respect with research animals too, not just in regards to consent.

B: Yeah, I mean, you must pay attention to the animals, make sure you're building that bond. I think touching is a massive thing that people should be making sure they do. I think if you don't regularly touch a pig in some way, as in you know, giving them a scratch, you know, just touching them on their nose. Anything like that, I don't think you can truly build up a bond without it. I think people should pay attention particularly to the touch aspect.

K: do you think pigs enjoy that the most?

P: Yeah, I do. I think they need it. I really do think they need it to build a trust in us. Yeah. Cos otherwise I guess we are still a predator to them, because a predator doesn't touch it unless It's going to kill it. and obviously when animals are housed together, they are touching each other all the time. They are grooming each other, sleeping next to each other. They have that contact. So, I think if you become part of that, they like it.

K: So, they see you as not a threat?

P: Like an odd part of the family.

K: And do you have any other comments you'd like to make about some of the themes we talked about?

P: I don’t think so. Like I say, the touch thing is really important. I think individualised care can be important if they are there long enough. Or if it's kind of obvious that they need it. And I think just making sure that people are educated in knowing those things and how important it really Is to build their trust. they need to be educated in pig behaviour and what they need, to maintain their biological needs, basic biological needs.

K: Would regular training help?

P: Yes, and also regular interest in them. like it's not just a job that you do every day, I mean.. It is, but you have to take an interest.

K: Do you have regular training?

P: Not specifically for specific species care. You know, everyone here is kind of worked with pigs, sheep and cows for how many years. So, everyone has the basic understanding of how to look after them. But no, there isn't. There isn't any training. Like I say, I wasn't actually ever trained to look after a pig, I had to learn that myself. I was chucked into this building and was told “these are your pigs now. You look after them. This is how much they get fed a day”. I thought, OK, I'll just work this out myself then.

K: Do you think having that species specific training would be helpful?

P: Yeah. Yeah, I do. Especially because everyone here does work with cows, sheep and pigs in the large units. I do think it would be good if there was training. I mean, you'll hear like bits and bits of information here and there from people. Even now I feel like I don't fully understand how to look after... I think pigs are much more simple than sheep. I think sheep are very particular. There's lots of things to do with sheep. Cows, not so much, but yeah species specific training would be good.

K: you also mentioned individualised care for some pigs who were here for longer periods of time. What did you mean by that?

P: So, I mean, just likes knowing that some pigs are more confident others. Some are a bit more scared of you. So, you have to make sure that you take the time with those pigs that are a bit more afraid. Nervous. Um. I think even, I mean there was a pig I used to work with. They have their cycle, the same as humans, and when it was kind of around her time of the month, she would noticeably change. Not all of them. It was mainly this one pig, but she would get much more aggressive with me, even though we had a really good bond. Really special bond. Like she would just change her demeanour, she would just be, you know, she was quite a bolshie pig anyway. But when she was like on her time of the month, I was like, don't come near me. I just knew not to go near her because she'd get really annoyed just being around me. I mean, for your safety as well as making sure their welfare is looked after. things like that.

K: You had a special bond with her?

P: She was my favourite.

K: Why?

P: I don't know. I had her since she was a piglet, she was called Ruby. I think because she was just so different from everyone else in that herd. Everyone called her the bitch, because she was a bit of a bitch really! And I did have a special bond with her, I was in there all the time, and I was their primary caregiver. So she was, you know, she would listen to me if I wanted to do something, she would do it. Like I said, we have the mutual respect that I give her what she wants, as in her biological basic needs, and then she will do what I would like her to do. And then if other people came in and those people weren't that confident, she would pick up on that immediately and she would start pushing. She was quite pushy anyway, with her nose, really inquisitive, very strong. But yeah, if you if you didn't hold your ground with her, then she would just mess you around and she would take charge. So, I think that's why we have a special bond because we did have that mutual respect. Like, yeah, she knew that I wouldn't let her do that to me. Yeah.

K: So, do all of the control pigs have names?

P: Those ones did. I don't know if they do now, I doubt they do now because I think some people get funny about names. I think some people think if they have a name, it becomes more emotional if they go to PM. It's not personally like that for me, so there I did name them all and it didn't make a difference. Didn't make a difference if she was number 60, or Ruby. To me, it's still a name. I am still referring to her as an identity, it’s just more of a human name.

K: But generally, the other pigs don’t have names?

P: I don’t think so no. But we did make a point of naming them because we knew they would be there for a few years. It’s just nice to have cute little names. With the sheep we have Wonky and Arthur too. They’ve been here a good few years, so you do start calling them different names. There was a cow here and he was known as goggly eyes, because he had goggly eyes. It's still a name. You just start saying “oh that wonky sheep” and it sticks as Wonky...

K: Does the care between the control animals here and those in trials differ?

P: I'd say generally no. just aside from the long-term care that you give them. with pigs. You have to keep in mind their feet. and they need to keep the weight off or realistically they're going to go to PM. so you need to make sure you're not over feeding them. But in general, no.