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Swine Newsletter
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Summertime Update

PRRS

The good news is that it has (up until now at least!) been a relatively quiet spring and summer as far as pig health is concerned. Our practice has not had to deal with any new PRRS or PED breaks recently. However, in the previous years I've noticed that after the wheat comes off and some pig manure gets spread on the ground there often is some new cases in August.

PEDv

There is some good news for farms that have PED and PDCoV – new funding has been obtained for elimination projects!

*Rectal
Prolapses*

Rectal prolapses in grower pigs has been common this winter. We usually look into mycotoxin levels in the feed, fibre levels, particle size, environmental factors like crowding, water and feed availability, and diseases like ileitis, salmonella, brachyspira spp, etc.

I have been involved with a long on-going problem of rectal and vaginal prolapses in sows. We changed the rations, investigated, medicated, etc., etc. with no success. Finally someone noticed some tingling while showering in or out and had the barn checked for stray voltage. Sure enough, prolapses have disappeared and the herd is much more content since filter boxes have been installed. Very interesting case.

*Ear
Necrosis*

Ear necrosis is another odd problem that crops up here and there. Sometimes the cause is obvious (crowding) but sometimes nothing seems amiss. Leaving the temperature settings alone but moving the minimum ventilation fans set point up helps to move more air and improve the environment (lower humidity, lower gas levels, fewer bugs, etc.). This often helps cure a barn of ear necrosis.

*Joint Ill
Case*

A weaner barn having too many cull pigs due to lameness was presented. There was also a lot of ear necrosis. We postulated that the joint infections were actually being caused by the infection from the ears. Sure enough, leaving the room temperature curve alone but moving more air did the trick. Ear necrosis and joint ill solved. We didn't have to use a new vaccine or a special antibiotic program.

PWFTS

Post Weaning Failure to Thrive Syndrome (PWFTS) is a problem that Dr. Terri O'Sullivan at OVC investigated and described to us several years ago. Some pigs just won't eat after they have been weaned. They smack and chomp but won't eat. She found that they did respond to Vitamin D. It seems that a significant number of piglets are low on Vitamin D when they are weaned.

Anemia

The same group of veterinarians at OVC have been looking into iron deficiency, anemia and the effect of iron statues at weaning on post weaning performance. For years and years we have recommended 200 mg of iron at about 3 days of age to prevent anemia which limits their growth. Two things that they have found is 1) Yes, there are a few anemic piglets at weaning. Three weeks later, those pigs were 0.82 kg lighter than piglets that weren't anemic at weaning time. 2) More pigs were anemic 3 weeks after weaning than at weaning! And there is an association with high levels of zinc oxide in the first weaner feeds (too help prevent diarrhea) and the prevalence of anemia.

I was presented with a case of high culling, high mortality and over all under performance in the weaner rooms of a large farrow to finish herd. They were on a good vaccination program and they were receiving long acting antibiotics at weaning. But they were weaning the piglets pretty early, often at 16 days of age.

Water

We decided to increase the weaning age to 21 days, to give a second iron injection at 14 days of age, to increase the number of water nipples/bowls per pen, to use clip on auxiliary round waterers for 3 or 4 days post weaning, and to provide vitamin D in the water for 3 or 4 days after weaning. We removed the long acting antibiotics shot. What a difference. Mortality and culling has been reduced to 1% or less and the pigs are growing much better. Big improvement for just a few minor, very inexpensive changes! We didn't really have a specific diagnosis for this case. I think that it was just a case of a combination of things – maybe a bit too young, maybe some were anemic, maybe some needed vitamin D supplementation, maybe the availability of water was an issue. Remember, water is the cheapest nutrient and the most important nutrient. If we can get pigs to increase their water consumption then we can get them to eat more. If they eat more they just do better – health and weight gain.

Anyway, those are a few thoughts for now.

Have a nice August.

Reg
RR/cp