



Iron deficiency anaemia in piglets

At the moment we are seeing an increase in the incidence of iron deficiency anaemia in piglets due to the presence of larger litters (which means lower iron stores at birth), despite routine iron injections with Gleptosil or Uniferon.

The piglet has no access to iron other than the sows' milk, which is often insufficient to meet the piglets requirements. The dietary requirement for iron during the first period of a piglet's life is 15 mg/day, but only 1 mg/day can be supplied by the milk. It is necessary therefore to give extra iron either by mouth or by injection. After this, normally the intake of creep feed becomes sufficient to supply the dietary requirements for iron and the blood haemoglobin levels normally begin to rise again in deficient pigs. A shortage of iron results in lowered levels of haemoglobin in the red cells, (anaemia), a lowered capacity for the carriage of oxygen around the body and an increased susceptibility to disease.

Affected pigs appear pale and the ears, belly and mucosae may be yellowish



in colour. Their growth rate is up to 10% less than that of normal pigs. They could also appear thin, hairy, lethargic and the presence of diarrhoea is common (although faeces are normal in colour). If the pigs are left untreated, severely-affected piglets may die suddenly.

Garth Pig Practice are fortunate to have available to our clients, the on farm use of a Hemocue machine. This device measures the level of haemoglobin in piglet blood (a small sample can be taken from the ear vein) which may be indicative of iron deficiency.

Topical Talk – what we are seeing....

Rectal Strictures

It is a common condition in growing pigs, often considered a sequel to rectal prolapse, in which scar tissue forms a ring inside the rectum which eventually closes, obstructing defecation. Another possible cause might be infections or trauma (including short tail docking) that interfere with rectal blood supply.

As result, faecal material accumulates in the large intestine leading to a gradual increase in the size of the abdomen (bloated pigs), with loss of body condition. These pigs often become dull and depressed.



There is no treatment for this condition. Although some pigs seem to recover spontaneously there is always reoccurrence. This is why as soon as pigs are recognised they should be euthanased on welfare grounds.

New Lorry washing rules at abattoirs

As part of British Meat Processors Association's pig health and welfare assurance, new rules are due to be put in place shortly which is expected to stipulate that ALL lorries MUST be washed thoroughly prior to leaving abattoirs, as part of a required documented biosecurity risk assessment.

Farrowing House Enrichment. Is it worth it?

We are all used to environmental enrichment being talked about and also being a requirement under the Red Tractor scheme. However very little is mentioned regarding enrichment within the farrowing crate. A recent study has suggested that perhaps this is the wrong approach. In the study litters of undocked piglets were assigned to two groups with the only differences being one group was given sisal rope at birth and shredded newspaper daily through the suckling period. In the group provided rope and paper the number of pigs with severely bitten tails was 22% lower at 9 weeks. The results were less clear on mild lesions however the piglets in the study herd were undocked and it is obviously the severe tail bitten pigs that are the most concerning. As to how long the effects persist the study only monitored piglets for 9 weeks and I would expect that the reduction could be less on units where tail biting occurs later. However on units which experience problems beginning earlier in the system it may well have a positive impact. Another study also found shredded paper, when provided in the crate, reduced the number of teat bitten sows and facial lesions of piglets. This suggests that there are perhaps other benefits too. In summary if you are having problems with tail biting or teat damage it may be worth trying to provide some shredded paper and seeing if you see a benefit. In the study it was provided every day for the full 4 weeks before weaning however benefits may be seen at lower rates. Also no studies appear to have been done on flank biting but it may be worth a try. As always if you do decide to give this a go then please let us know how you get on!

While it seems early to be discussing summer infertility many herds have predictable dips in fertility associated with seasonal (or unseasonal!) weather. Gilts may be delivered 2 – 3 months before anticipated service dates dependent on the farm management so leave plenty of time to analyse last few years performance to predict drops in performance and speak to your breeding stock supplier in plenty of time to organise extra replacements.

New Vet



Tom graduated in 2011 from Nottingham and has since worked in purely production animal practice.

Tom has a keen interest in preventative health management and as such has decided to specialise in pigs. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome Tom to Garth Pig Practice and we look forward to introducing him to you in the near future.

African Swine Fever survey

The Royal Vet College has requested your help to try to get a view of pig farmers' awareness of African swine fever (ASF), its symptoms, and their motivations or barriers for reporting or not reporting a suspicion of the disease. This knowledge will be especially important in improving the chances of early detection of ASF if it came into this country and therefore minimising the spread of infection between farms. The survey should not take more than 10 minutes and your answers will be completely anonymous and confidential.

The link to the online survey is:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5QS6XK9>