

How to beat baby pig scours

NEWARK, Del. — The incidence of scours and diarrhea in newborn pigs varies dramatically among swine operations. Some producers expect to see an outbreak within three to five days after a litter is farrowed. Others claim the problem seldom occurs.

Prevention of this baby pig killer is largely a matter of management, says University of Delaware extension livestock specialist Richard Fowler.

Baby pig scours, E. coli scours, or colibacillosis are some of the names used to describe an intestinal disorder in newborn pigs characterized by liquid feces. There are several possible causes, including viruses and bacteria.

Transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE) is typical of a severe virus-borne disease that is one cause of the condition. Tests should be run to be sure what the organism is, says Fowler. Treatment can be effective once you know specific facts about the organism and its susceptibility to certain drugs.

The cause of coliform scours is the bacteria E. coli, a normal inhabitant of the large intestine. The incidence of E. coli scours is influenced by herd management and the facilities provided for the newborn pig.

Given the right conditions, certain strains of E. coli multiply

in the small intestine. These organisms produce a toxin that causes large loss of body fluids. These are lost through the gut in such quantities that pigs become dehydrated, develop acidosis, and may die.

Large numbers of E. coli are present in the newborn pig's environment whenever it is dirty and wet, the ventilation is poor, and humidity high.

An important source of infection is other pigs with the disease. These can shed up to one billion E. coli per cc of manure.

The most important factor influencing whether or not a pig gets the disease is environmental temperature. It's the easiest to control. Young pigs are very sensitive to chilling. If they become chilled, they have lower resistance to infections.

There are no antibodies in the newborn pig at birth. Sows have antibodies to many organisms in their first milk. The baby pig must get this antibody-containing colostrum if it is to have protection.

Mastitis or other diseases that interfere with lactation often prevent it from getting this much-needed protection during its first 24 hours.

Once a pig gets diarrhea from E. coli it must be treated promptly

with antibacterials effective against the particular strain of the organism. But don't use drugs indiscriminately. Organisms build resistance to them, says Fowler.

Prevention is the key to success against colibacillosis, he says. There's no substitute for cleanliness. Central farrowing houses must be cleaned so that all organic matter is removed. Then they should be disinfected and allowed to dry before putting pigs in them.

The sow should also be cleaned

— especially on the underline. Other types of farrowing facility must be dry, well-bedded and have adequate ventilation to keep them dry.

Help the young pig maintain resistance by keeping stress to a minimum. Prompt, continued regular nursing and an environment that's warm and draft-free are essential in reducing stress. Chilling is a severe stress. Pigs should be warm enough to sleep stretched out, not piled or huddled, or continuously moving to

a warm spot in the pile.

Vaccination with custom cultures developed from the problem herd is another way of treating scours. This is done in consultation with a veterinarian.

Many drugs are advertised for use in treating E. coli diarrhea of newborn pigs, but these may be ineffective because of resistance that has been built up to them.

Prevention is the best protection. Clean, dry, warm facilities reduce stress and help maintain the young pig's natural resistance.



Gov. Dick Thornburgh proclaimed March 19 as Agriculture Day in Pennsylvania. Joining in the ceremonies are, front, Gail McPherson, Penn's Agri-Women and State Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell; rear, left to right,

James Fink FFA; Charles Wismer, PA State Grange; Donald Parke, Penn Ag Industries; Rocco Pugliese, Food Processors Association; and Richard Newpher, Pennsylvania Farmers Association.

Game Commission to meet

HARRISBURG — The regular Spring meeting of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, open to the public, will be held Friday, April 3, at 8:30 a.m. at the agency's headquarters, 8000 Derry Street, Harrisburg.

Proposed hunting season dates,

bag limits and regulations governing hunting for the 1980-81 hunting license year will be considered.

Final action on proposals will not be taken until the meeting of the Commission in Harrisburg in June.

Ask

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are: the practice does not confer 100 percent good, active immunity and, over a period of 12 months, the active immunity may wear off, hence older cows may once again become susceptible to parvovirus. This waxing and waning may require a boosting of exposure, and calls for a reconsideration of the old school of thought which felt

only young gilts were susceptible to the virus.

At present however, the only way to prevent SMEDI is to practice the recommended 30-day waiting period after selection of breeding stock and allowing the most feasible exposure to the fecal material of the mature breeding herd.

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