

Pseudorabies breaks out in Franklin Co.

BY SHEILA MILLER

HARRISBURG — The highly contagious pseudorabies disease that has been plaguing hog producers in Lancaster and surrounding counties for almost two-years has crept into a Franklin County farrow-to-finish hog operation.

According to Dr. John Cable of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industries, this is the first case of pseudorabies in Franklin County. The disease previously had seemed confined to the Ephrata area of Lancaster County, with only a few isolated cases occurring in Berks, Lebanon, Chester and Schuylkill counties. There are presently 25 herds under quarantine — 23 are in the Ephrata core area with 1 in Berks and 1 in Lebanon counties.

A local veterinarian alerted BAI on Dec. 27 when he suspected PRV

in a group of 15 steers on the farm. Several of the steers were exhibiting the symptoms of 'mad itch' — rubbing their heads and scratching severely.

PRV, which is passed from swine to cattle through nose-to-nose or nose-to-rectum contact, affects the steer's central nervous system and results in death within 4 or 5 days. Although it is not a 'dead-end' disease in swine, it causes severe losses in pig numbers due to a high incidence of mortality. It is suspected that the Franklin steers were infected with the virus through contact with the sows housed next to them with only a fence separating them.

After the death of two of the steers during the first week, the Franklin farmer submitted two complete carcasses to the BAI Summerdale laboratory for diagnostic work. The veterinarians and staff isolated the PRV-causing herpes virus in a brain culture.

Simultaneously, the staff ran blood tests on the Franklin farmer's pigs. All tests came back 'positive' for PRV.

Since the disease broke out in the herd, 14 of the 15 steers died, and the farmer is suffering severe losses in his pig crop, reports Cable. Out of a total of 24 litters, 22 have been lost.

The source of the PRV in Franklin County is being investigated at the present time through the efforts of Dr. Robert Probasco, Region 6 veterinarian. "At the present time there are no leads on how the disease was introduced," comments Cable.



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