

Pork Congress

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ty can rise as high as 50 percent in the farrowing house. Duration of this acute form lasts about 2-4 months.

PRRS is transmitted by pig-to-pig contact through sneezing. The virus is shed effectively through manure. Also, the virus which causes the disease can be readily transmitted through the placenta. The virus can travel by air room to room and barn to barn. Also, the virus can be present in semen.

The virus can attack any size of pig. According to Wetzell, the herds infected include a large portion of Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and states bordering Pennsylvania, including Ohio, Virginia, and Maryland.

The problem with the disease, according to the veterinarian, is that there are two strains of virus, and it can last for weeks. Also, the virus destroys the lung immune cells — which paves the way for other diseases to take hold with the hogs. This attack on the pig's immunity allows the pig to develop a wide range of other diseases,



Three major companies are "feverishly working" on a PRRS vaccine, said Dr. Tom Wetzell, South Central Veterinary Associates, from Wells, Minn. On Wednesday, Wetzell told about 100 pork producers at the Keystone Pork Congress that once the vaccine is available, it will have as good an effect on controlling PRRS as the PRV vaccine had on pseudorabies.

including pseudorabies.

However, not all pigs get the symptoms of the disease, though they can test serologically positive, according to Wetzell. And eventually the herd can recover somewhat. Knowing this, producers need to examine the prevalence of PRRS in the herd and determine whether it is economically feasible to implement a reduction or elimination program.

There is a "glimmer of hope" in controlling PRRS, said Wetzell. He told the producers that if they have strong, healthy pigs, survivability increases and other, less expensive methods of controlling the problem can be used.

Producers need to control the host pig, the agent responsible for PRRS, and look into the environ-



Third place went to Lebanon County, with members, from left, Jason Shirk, Jon Harnish, Wendy Atkins, and Katie Lefever. At far right is Tom Moyer, Hatfield representative.



Berks County won second place at the Keystone Pork Bowl. From left, Richard W. Kerper, Jr.; Leon Hunter; Pat Hunter, coach; Tim Eschbach; Jason Manbeck; and Tom Moyer, Hatfield representative.

ment that makes he pig susceptible.

There are three ways to test a herd for the presence of the PRRS virus:

- Serological tests, which indicates herd exposure to the virus. This includes the IFA test, an accurate, less expensive test. Also included is the more expensive, longer-lasting test, called SN. The serological test with the most promise, ELISA, may soon be available for veterinarians.
- Virus isolation. There are a variety of methods available

through blood testing the sows and finishing pigs.

- FA test, a rapid test that is expensive and is difficult to run.

Wetzell said that producers wanting to control the virus need to test, in the farrowing operations, the blood of 30 sows regularly. For finishing barns, 10 animals should be blood tested per barn.

Control must start with the gilt and sire sources. Producers should make sure they have proof from their gilt and AI suppliers that the seedstock tests serologically negative.

Wetzell recommends the following proposed overall management control methods:

- Phase I: producers should examine pig flow, make sure the operation is truly all-in, all-out, and keep the area warm, dry, and draft free. Feed high quality diet and administer proper medications.

- Phase II (to be used if Phase I is ineffective). Leave pigs alone as much as possible (avoid stress) and wean the pigs at an older age. The antibodies the pig picks up from the sow help control PRRS.

- Phase III (if both Phase I and II are ineffective). This includes partial depopulation, moving through testing to another site, and total repopulation.

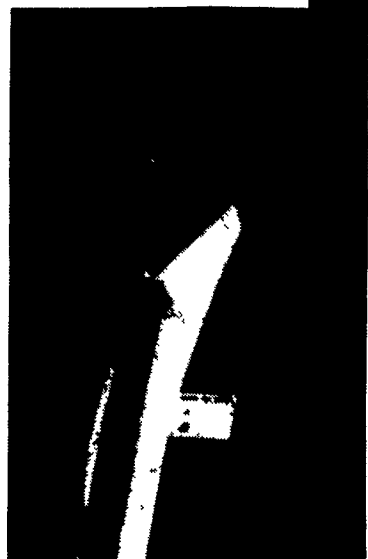
Toward the year 2000, according to the veterinarian, the incidence of PRRS should stabilize with the introduction of the vaccine and implementing proper herd control management.

Market Outlook

The 1994 economic year could be one of mixed emotions for hog producers.

While prices for hogs per hundredweight will average \$2 more this year than last, because of a reduction in inventory because of bad weather throughout the country last year (floods in the Midwest and drought in the East), feed costs could rise, offsetting any gain in price.

That's the message presented by H. Louis Moore, Penn State pro-



Dr. David J. Meisinger, chief operating officer, Fetterman Farms Limited, Paris, Ill., spoke about lessons learned from a Midwest packer about bringing the best carcass to slaughter.

fessor of ag economics, at the Keystone Pork Congress.

Moore said that there are a number of positive things happening with the national economy. The interest rate for borrowers looks good, with rates the lowest in the three decades. Inflation is only about 3 percent, and food prices will rise less than the rate of inflation. Unemployment stands at 6.4 percent, down from last year's at this time (about 7.1 percent). GATT and NAFTA look to help agriculture in a big way "across the board," said Moore.

So what's the bad news? Slow growth in the GNP, the looming question of paying for national health care, and, most of all, the price of corn.

In 1993, according to the Penn State economist, corn inventories stood at 2.1 billion bushels. In 1994, the inventory stood at only 800 million bushels — "a very sharp drop, the lowest since the early 1970s," said Moore. The 1993 crop is projected at 6.34 billion bushels for the U.S., down 33

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Virgil E. Gutshall, Jr., Blain, was honored as Pork All-American at the Keystone Pork Congress.



Pork producers can weather the ups and downs of market prices if their operation is under contract and producers strive to be more productive, according to pork producers on a special production contract panel at the Keystone Pork Congress. From left, Dr. Ken Kephart, Penn State swine specialist, moderator; Jerry Hostetter, Swatara Swine, Denver; and Alvin Shaffer, Dalmatia.



Another panel, composed of herd representatives, examined some pointers used in running a more efficient operation in order to meet packer needs. From left, Dr. Ken Kephart, Penn State swine specialist; Robert Mikesell, White Oak Mills, Elizabethtown; and Dave Heckel, Farm Crest Feeds, Littitz.