

Vet: PRRS Can Be Treated Effectively With Medication, Management

NEW HOLLAND (Lancaster Co.) — The devastating porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) virus can be controlled in swine herds simply by using methods to acclimate herd resistance to the virus through gilt and nursery management, according to a Midwest veterinarian.

Based on extensive research, Dr. Scott Dee, a veterinarian with Swine Health Center from Morris, Minn., told 75 area producers and Pfizer customers that research has uncovered methods to effectively deal with PRRS in swine herds.

Dee spoke at the annual Pfizer Swine Serviceman's Meeting on Wednesday at Yoder's Restaurant.

The PRRS virus causes a condition which suppresses a pig's immune response, allowing it to contract a host of more debilitating diseases. PRRS, once known as mystery pig disease and other names, was first identified in

North Carolina in 1987. It wasn't until 1992 that researchers first isolated the virus in herds in North America.

The disease effects all animals in a herd. High fevers develop on the herd. The animals become off feed and lethargic and develop severe respiratory symptoms. The incidence of mortality, including abortions and stillbirths, can rise dramatically in a herd.

PRRS paves the way for other, more dangerous, diseases to affect the herd.

"It's a very frustrating disease to treat," said Dee. "Nothing seems to work." He said that researchers tried everything they could, including medication to boost immune response, to little avail.

The hope for a vaccine, some two years away, holds little promise because of the different strains of virus which can be present. Also, the virus easily mutates — changes — which makes detecting and trying to treat it even more difficult.

The key to treating PRRS, according to the veterinarian, lies in a research project that looked at two Arizona farrowing operations. In one farm, Farm A, 1,500 sows and their offspring were examined for PRRS and the effect on the herd. In a similar farm, Farm B, located within five miles of Farm A, 2,500 sows and offspring were examined.

The results were clear.

What caused the virus to take hold in Farm A was the fact that Farm A was purchasing gilts from another source. Those gilts showed no contact with the virus, and had no immunity. Farm B, which showed little effects of the virus, used in-house multipliers — gilts from its own stock that were already "acclimated" to the virus. Slowly, the herd was able to build up sufficient immunity to PRRS.

Also, research indicates that to effectively treat the virus, partial depopulation, which uses an all-in, all-out approach to the nursery (and including a recommended



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7-day down time with complete cleaning and disinfecting of the nursery) was most effective in ridding the virus from the herd.

This method can be used even in relatively hog-dense populations in some areas.

Facilities also have to be completely separated if they are on site. They cannot share the same air passage or hallway, according to Dee.

The important thing to remember, according to Dee, is to "work with your veterinarian really closely and use serology to make decisions on exactly what to do," he told the producers.

Also, making use of modified medicated early weaning (MMEW) can help keep PRRS and other debilitating swine diseases out of the operation.

But producers should do all they

can to reduce the "challenge" to the pigs from viruses — keep the operation free of bacteria and viruses — to more effectively control diseases on the farm, according to Dee.

A form of MMEW correctly implemented by the veterinarian can translate into profits for producers, because hogs can be brought to market a month earlier with an improved average daily gain. Also, pigs will be healthier, which translates into savings on disease prevention.

MMEW centers on weaning at an earlier age — about 12-14 days — and moving pigs, if possible, off site. Because sows can transmit viruses and bacteria to pigs, it is important to get the pigs away from contact with the sows and start medication early.

If the pigs can't be moved offsite, according to Dee, then there are methods of management to separate the pigs sufficiently enough from the sows to gain good herd health protection.

One method included adopting the use of refrigerator trailer trucks and using that as the nursery. With inexpensive modifications, Dee said research has shown that biosecurity was improved and the nursery worked quite well in all stages.

Stress was kept to a minimum, even when the site was located up to seven miles away.

A careful feed and medication program was followed which translated into improvements in feed performance, average daily gain, and days to market.

Diseases such as PRRS and Salmonella-related pneumonia, in addition to Actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae and other diseases, must be treated early or they can cost a lot in terms of lost market value, according to Marc White, Pfizer swine species specialist, Greenfield, Ind. Producers need to look at how medication is important to profitability.

He spoke about using Mecadox, a Pfizer feedgrade antibacterial that can help fight disease challenges and promote rapid growth



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and efficient feed utilization. In trials, Mecadox helped pigs get to 75 pounds of body weight nearly four days faster than other medications and nearly 16 days faster than nonmedicated pigs.

Also, the MMEW program at the University of Minnesota utilized by Dee made use of the injectable antibiotic from Pfizer, Liqueamycin LA-200.

Other topics at the seminar examined the effects of research conducted by Dr. Al Sutton, animal science department at Purdue University, on N-Serve, an inhibitor added to slurry that inhibits denitrification, allowing nitrogen to be present for crop utilization. Also, Sutton spoke about the importance of knifeing or injecting fertilizer to hold down volatilization, denitrification, runoff, and leaching at manure application time.



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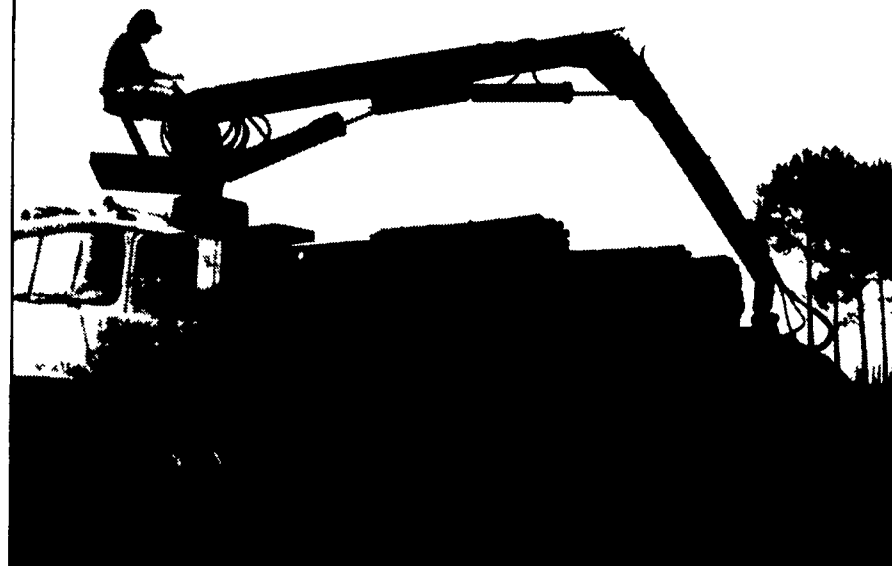
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