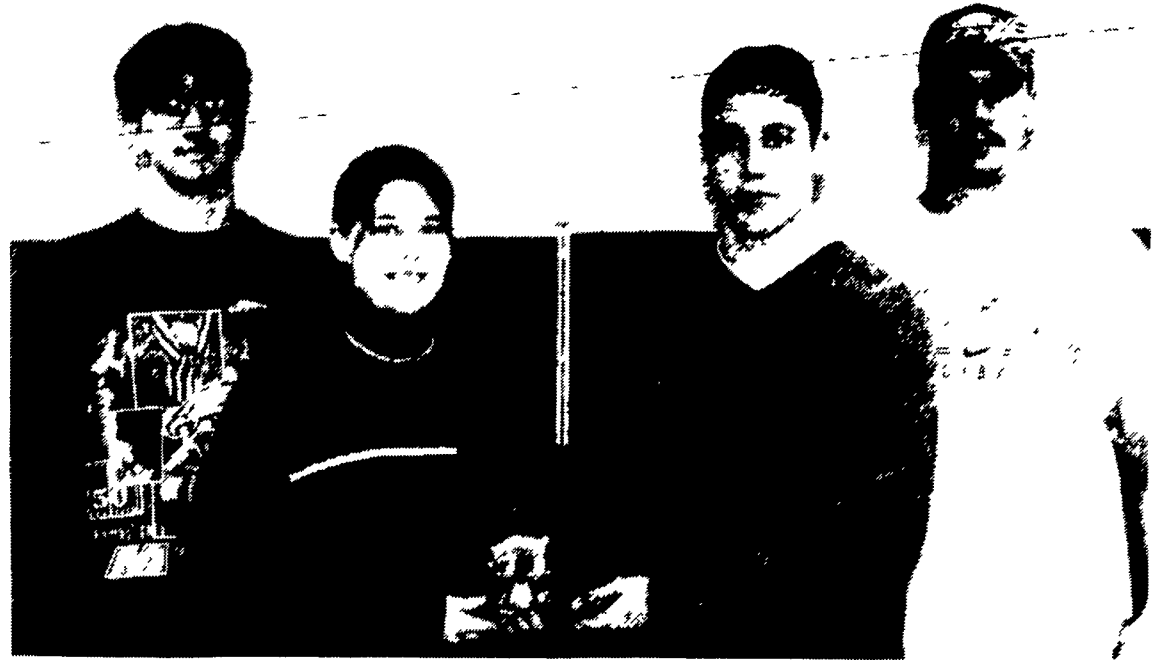


With Right Tools, Vets Can Pinp



The key to controlling PRRS in a herd, according to Scott Dee, University of Minnesota associate professor of swine medicine and world-renowned PRRS expert, right, is knowing exactly when the "infection happens in the pig before we vaccinate," he said. At left is Ken Kephart, Penn State swine specialist.



The second place Pork Bowl Team from Bucks County includes, from left, Bill Buckman, Rosanna Derstina, Jimmy Harris, and Don Buckman.

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duration for pig immunity, at least "not as long as we think," he said.

The virus is spread by mixing older, poor growing pigs with younger pigs. Through sneezing and other means, the virus is spread. With PRRS, the body's resistance to more life-threatening diseases is lowered, so it is not PRRS which kills the pig, but streptococcal meningitis, mycoplasmosis, Glassers Disease, and others.

In the lab, signs of PRRS include premature farrowing of weak piglets. And they are big pigs, said Dee, usually in the third trimester, late gestation, born dead. Some that are born and still alive show poor signs of weaning and have a gaunt look about them. Infected pigs have respiratory distress caused by blockages of lung air sacks by virus cells, bacteria, and tissue debris. They can also exhibit edema, conjunctivitis, dyspnea, poor hair coats, abnormal skin tone, and irregular piglet weights within litters.

Dee told the producers to look at the older sows, who are most likely to carry the virus. It's also possible that birds jumping from farm to farm, ducks, guinea fowl, and humans can carry the virus into the barn.

The good news is the virus can be readily killed with any type of over-the-counter disinfectant. The virus can survive readily in wet or frozen conditions, so knowing the seedstock source of pigs, isolating them, and observing good biosecurity can go long ways to controlling PRRS.

Nursery depopulation only serves up a short-term fix to the PRRS challenge. The virus, which comes from the sows, can transfer readily to the young stock.

He emphasized the importance of good vaccination. It's important to vaccinate to get into the muscle of the pig so the vaccination can work through the bloodstream. Use 1/2 inch needle length on pigs, 1 1/2 inches on sows, and 1-inch needle length on finishing hogs. Keep in mind there is a lot of fat in the neck of the pig, he said.

In 1995, Dee noted he worked with PCR diagnostics on a 300-sow, one-site hog producer. The herd, infected with a field virus, saw a lot of problems in the nursery, including indications of PRRS in the pigs, with their ears back, fuzzy fur, with a gaunt look, and a 1.5 percent increase in mor-

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