



Uniferon Best Practice Recommendation

Virus disease in the herd

Increasingly viral infections are becoming a key health issue in swine production. As many of the bacterial diseases are well controlled and prevented through management and other interventions, viral infections are seen at herd level.

Virus and anaemia

Pigs suffering from a viral infection are often pale and appear depressed for a shorter period of time. Depending on the viral infection it may last from 0-7 days. Pigs, who become chronically infected, e.g. Post Weaning Multisystemic Wasting Syndrome (PMWS) pigs, will show symptoms over a longer period and often until they die.

In many herds the presence of a viral infection often means the pigs are also anaemic. This is easily verified through blood samples from the animals. Especially piglets and pigs shortly after weaning are at risk. In a herd with an outbreak of pandemic flu, it is common that the pigs are anaemic for a period of approximately 2 weeks in spite of appropriate iron supplementation due to immunosuppression.

In immunosuppressed pigs it may be advantageous to administer further iron treatment since turnover of red blood cells is greatly increased. Bach et al., 2006 demonstrate that a second injection of 200 mg of iron increased haemoglobin level and subsequently improved growth rate post weaning in an immunosuppressed herd (PMWS positive). Additional treatment of up to the full dose should only be done after professional assessment and direction of the veterinarian.

Discussion

Adequate iron supplementation is critical to a herd when it is affected by a viral infection. The better supplementation with

iron and subsequent higher haemoglobin levels in the pigs, the better they are able to resist the infection. Herds with existing anaemia prior to a viral infection are affected more than herds where such conditions are under control.

It is not unusual to experience a drop in the weaning weight of up to 0.5 kg per pig when the animals are infected by a viral infection. This means there is good reason to ensure optimum haemoglobin levels among the pigs.

Conclusion

1. Pigs with viral infection often become anaemic – for a shorter or longer period of time
2. Especially piglets and pigs during the first two weeks after weaning are exposed
3. Adequate iron supplementation and subsequent haemoglobin level is a “help” during infection
4. It may be advantageous to give further iron treatment to immunosuppressed pigs

Sincerely
The Uniferon Team

