

Borehole Water Quality Testing

With the recent heavy snowfalls and poor weather, the water table is high and there are risks of borehole contamination. Now that Red Tractor standards require annual testing of groundwater quality, many farms will have run samples from their boreholes. While the requirement is only annual, it is worth taking samples at different times of year as the results can be very different. Wetter periods, such as the one we are going through currently, can leach matter from the soil into the groundwater, compared with drier periods when this would occur less. A single, annual test will not give an accurate year-round picture of the quality of borehole water.

The Red Tractor requirements are looking specifically at coliforms and total viable count (TVC), i.e. an assessment of contamination with bacteria and micro-organisms in the water. If a water source has high numbers of bacteria, it can lead to a reduction in appetite, growth and feed conversion efficiency. It can also be linked with higher numbers of returns and abortions, likely because of the body's inflammatory reaction to constant exposure to bacteria.

It can be worth testing for more than just micro-organisms, as concentrations of minerals and the water pH can have significant health impacts as well. Sulphates for example, can lead to looseness if present at high quantities in the water. High levels of iron, common in certain areas of UK groundwater, has also been linked with looseness in pigs and is a foodstuff for certain bacteria. A lot of dissolved minerals can cause build-up in pipes and lead to reduced flow rates to the pigs.

Taking multiple samples from around the farm can also be useful in gauging if there are any issues in the pipework and not just at the source. Samples taken directly from drinkers risk giving a false reading as the pigs will contaminate them as they use them, so samples ought to be taken directly from pipes if possible.

Changes to eMB

To enable the electronic medicine book (eMB) to provide a more accurate farm antibiotic usage figure that is comparable between farms within similar production systems, there have been some changes and additions made to weight categories within the system.

The previous category for number of weaners moved off farm has now been split into two based on weaners over 5 weeks of age and weaned piglets under 5 weeks of age. There is also an additional category for breeding animals (gilts and boars) moved off farm.

For anyone recording their antibiotic use via the eMB spreadsheet, please download an updated copy of this so that the new categories mentioned above are included. Please note that this change came into effect on **26th March 2018**.

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Swine Dysentery - Germany

A new case of swine dysentery in Germany reported in the Vet Record this month re-emphasises the importance of biosecurity on farm. This particular case was newsworthy as the bacterium that caused the dysentery was not the classic form but another, closely-related bacterium that had not been found outside of Scandinavia before.

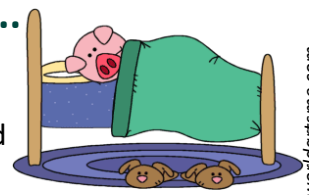
This wean-to-finish farm was badly affected, with 60% of the 1400 strong herd falling ill. A bloody, mucous-filled diarrhoea was observed and pigs appeared severely dehydrated. Mortality rose from 4% to 7% and average daily gain shrunk from 800 grams per day to 700 – pigs took an average of 10 days longer to finish. Despite the fact that the scour started in a smaller group of pigs that were treated promptly, the disease quickly spread to all age groups on the farm and led to the losses reported.

The case highlights the importance of both external and internal biosecurity. The initial infection was most likely brought onto farm by waterfowl, as the infection is known to be carried by ducks and direct contact was possible with the pigs on this site. Many diseases, such as dysentery and erysipelas, can be spread by wild birds and contact should be avoided as much as possible.

The authors of the paper also describe how several internal biosecurity factors contributed to the fast spread and eventual high cost of the outbreak. The pigs were housed in two large barns on a continuous flow system, with open partitions between pens allowing direct contact between groups of pigs. The farm used a solid scraper to muck out and so muck was mixed from pen to pen. While the possible emergence of a new strain of dysentery in Europe is worth monitoring, it is more important that we keep on top of biosecurity and prevent infections coming onto farm. If any do, it is important to prevent them spreading quickly and limiting any damage caused.

Current Clinical Trends – What are we seeing out there?...

We are currently seeing an increase in scours in pre-weaned piglets as well as respiratory disease within finishers. This is likely due to the very variable temperatures that we have been experiencing recently, both day to night and day to day.



Adjusting ventilation systems accordingly is important to make sure there is as little variation in temperature possible while maintaining air flow, even when we are not there. The on-going variable weather, including wind coming from different directions to usual, is causing flare ups of infections on farm that may not usually cause too many clinical issues. Please discuss any problems that you may be having with your vet.

Feedback

Please let us know if there is anything that you would like including, or more information on, in a future newsletter.

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