

## Greasy Pig Disease

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Greasy Pig Disease is caused by a bacterium called *Staphylococcus hyicus*.

Clinical signs are mostly seen with piglets which are up to 2 weeks old, but it can affect pigs up to 6 weeks of age and older.

The bacterium is transmitted from pig to pig and is contagious (can spread easily). In pre-weaned pigs, a few piglets or a litter may be affected, in contrast to post-weaned animals when litters are mixed and a greater number of pigs can show clinical signs.

*Staphylococcus hyicus* is found on the skin and does not usually cause clinical disease. The reservoir of infection for piglets is the sow's skin and the bacterium is transmitted to the piglet following direct skin contact with her during the farrowing period. For clinical signs to develop, entry into the pig has to be gained, and this occurs through skin wounds or abrasions where the skin defence barrier is weakened. These can be caused by fighting, the environment, or even parasite damage such as that caused by Mange mites.

Further spread of the bacterium between piglets occurs when they are in an environment that is warm and has high humidity.

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### Clinical Signs

After gaining entry through the skin, the bacterium infects the local area, which then becomes painful and reddened. The skin becomes thickened and oozes, progressing to a covering of greasy brown scabs that can extend over the whole body.

These lesions are not itchy, but they do leave the piglet's skin susceptible to other potential secondary infections.

As the skin lesions are usually painful, affected piglets may decrease their feed intakes (milk or creep) and this can lead to them becoming dehydrated and having a depressed growth rate.

Once infected, the bacteria can spread not only on the skin surface but also underneath the skin, which can make treatment difficult. If the infection gets into the pig's bloodstream, this is called septicaemia and can result in death.

*Staphylococcus hyicus* is often associated with ear tip necrosis, although other bacteria can also be involved, and it can also settle out in joints to give an increase in joint ill incidence on farm.

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**Greasy brown scabs commonly seen with Greasy Pig disease**

Picture from ASAS picture gallery

## Treatment

Treatment is usually effective when given promptly – pigs that have become weakened and are unlikely to respond to treatment should be euthanased. Greasy Pig usually responds to penicillin or tetracycline, and it is recommended to carry out an antibiotic sensitivity test if there is a poor response to treatment as the bacterium may be exhibiting some resistance.

Washing of any affected pig, and its penmates, in diluted Virkon-S or Povidone Iodine each day helps to reduce problems, allowing the disinfectant to warm to room temperature before using it.

Affected piglets should be encouraged to eat, along with increasing their water intakes so that they do not become dehydrated.

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## Control

Infection can persist in the environment and so affect subsequent batches. Good hygiene at all points is essential, with rooms being run on an All-In-All-Out basis and thorough washing and disinfection between batches. This includes removal of dust, since this will have a large bacterial load.

As discussed previously, sows carry the bacterium for Greasy Pig on their skin, most of the time without clinical signs. When clinical signs are seen however, it is advised to wash the sows with a suitable antiseptic solution (as detailed above) to decrease transmission to her piglets at farrowing.

There can be an increase in Greasy Pig if other diseases on farm are also in evidence. Immunosuppressive diseases, such as PRRS or Flu, decrease the pig's ability to defend themselves against other infections, giving the opportunity for *Staphylococcus hyicus* to cause a flare of clinical disease.

**Please speak to your Vet to discuss any questions about Greasy Pig disease on your farm.**



***Sow with a build up of *Staphylococcus hyicus* which can act as a reservoir of infection for piglets***

