

Sunburn and Heatstroke - reminder

With the recent high temperatures and very sunny days that we have been having, and whilst this is set to continue in the near future, please can we remind our clients about the risks of sunburn and heatstroke, along with techniques for managing both.

Although these two conditions can be linked, particularly on a dry, sunny day, they are in fact separate entities. Neither condition is exclusive to outdoor pig production.

Ensuring pigs have access to high water flow rates is important since pigs will normally drink a large volume of water (approx.1 litre per 10kg bodyweight per day and at least double that for a lactating sow), but during warm weather this will increase significantly. Since they do not sweat like us, pigs can cool down by passing larger quantities of warm urine generated from this increased water intake. If this mechanism, along with evaporation from wallowing, is not sufficient to control the pig's body temperature, it will be at risk of suffering from heatstroke.

On the whole, pigs are at their highest risk of **Sunburn** at the beginning of spring/summer, when the skin is not used to the ultraviolet (UV) light in the sun's rays that cause sunburn. Initially the skin will appear reddened, but this can progress to blisters and loss of the outer layer of the skin (the epidermis). The resulting pain and discomfort usually causes a decrease in growth rates for the rearing and finishing herd, and a decrease in reproductive performance in sows and boars. Water itself does not protect against the sun, but mud from wallows forms a physical barrier to the sun, as can heavy dust. Man-made wallows that are present for 2-3 days at a time are best, particularly for lactating sows, as this provides a mud covering on the skin but balances against the risk of infection from the wallows that can enter the teats and result in mastitis. Providing shade from the sun is also important, although can be technically difficult in the middle of a field!



Pigs with a layer of heavy dust and mud providing a physical barrier to the sun

Heatstroke (also known as hyperthermia) is an increase in body temperature above normal and where the body's cooling mechanisms and behaviour are unable to reduce the temperature back to normal. Humans sweat to decrease our body temperature. As the water in the sweat evaporates from the skin, it uses some heat and cools us down. Pigs cannot sweat except from their snouts, so they tend to play with water drinkers and wet themselves so that the water can then evaporate to cool them. In very high humidity though, the air is already saturated with water and further water will not evaporate so other cooling mechanisms need to be used if possible. These include lying in cooler areas such as dunging passageways, shaded areas and, in extreme conditions, panting. If heatstroke results, feed intakes, growth, reproductive disruption and even death can result. Providing extra shaded areas, increased air flow, and water misting can all help cool hot pigs.

Swine Influenza Submissions to the APHA

A recent report released by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA, formally known as the AHVLA) has shown that between January and March of this year there were an increased number of samples submitted for Swine Influenza (also known as pig 'flu) along with positive diagnoses made for the disease. During this first quarter of the year, the submission rate increased (in line with the clinical disease that we were seeing) and the number of positive samples was the highest the APHA have seen for 12 years, totalling 8.6% of their diagnoses over this period.

This does match with our recent newsletters highlighting the ongoing viral problems that were being seen on farms earlier this year. The cooler, wetter weather has enabled the virus to survive and be transmitted more easily, as well as making effective cleaning and disinfection more difficult. More recently this appears to have resulted in some farms continuing to have chronic, long term, rumbling issues related to viral circulation.

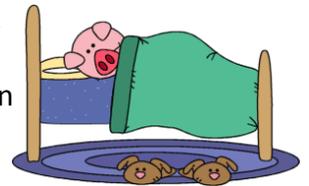
Please contact your vet if you have any questions.

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

At the moment we are seeing an increase in the number of outbreaks of tail biting in finishers, as well as some farms affected with flank and ear lesions.

Tail biting can be linked to many interacting and complicated factors that can be difficult to solve, including feed and water issues, stocking density issues, ventilation changes including humidity levels, as well as disease.

Tail biting is an immediate welfare problem, as are flank and ear lesions, and so finding the cause of the problem as soon as possible is important. Please discuss any issues that you may be having with your vet.



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As we have some warmer days please can we ask all our clients to check their water flow rates throughout different areas on farm. Pigs drink approx. 1 litre of water per 10kg bodyweight, and lactating sows will drink almost double this rate particularly in warmer weather. Please check there is enough access to fresh clean water 24 hours a day and water rates are adequate. If a pig cannot drink enough water, feed intake will decrease resulting in slower growth rates in growing pigs, and a smaller volume of milk will be produced by lactating sows.

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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