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Swine Dysentery

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Swine Dysentery

Consult your veterinarian. He's trained to help you prevent losses from disease.

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University, Brookings
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Swine Dysentery

(Vibrionic dysentery, bloody scour, black scour)

Swine dysentery is an infectious, highly transmissible disease, characterized by severe inflammation of the colon and cecum. The feces are watery, thickened with mucus and may be bloody. The disease spreads through contact with feces from infected pigs.

CAUSE
The cause of swine dysentery is not known. A bacteria, *Vibrio coli*, has been suspected for many years but research workers have been unable to reproduce the disease with pure cultures of this organism. Recent research shows evidence that a spiral-shaped organism, *Treponema hyodysenteriae*, may work in concert with the *Vibrio coli* and other normal bacterial flora of the colon.

The role of genetic, nutritional or management factors has not been established. Poor sanitation seems to add to the severity and reoccurrence of the disease.

SIGNS
The first signs of swine dysentery may appear 1-3 weeks after exposure to infected animals or contaminated materials or equipment. A longer incubation period may be encountered.

Diarrhea is the first obvious clinical sign followed by sunken flanks and depression. Initially, the feces usually contain bright red colored blood either with or without mucus. As the disease progresses, the consistency of the feces becomes watery and contains flecks of mucus. The presence of blood is usually diminished in the more chronically affected animals.

As many as 90% of the swine in a herd may be affected and up to 30% of them may die. Chronically infected animals fail to grow as expected and contribute greatly to economic loss.

SPREAD OF INFECTION
The infection is usually introduced into a herd through newly purchased swine. Sales yards and other concentration points for swine are potential sources of infection. Newly purchased swine should be isolated from the rest of the herd for 30 days for observation. Many producers have been confronted with swine dysentery after purchasing breeding stock or feeder pigs. Carrier pigs which show no signs of the disease are probably the main culprit for spread-

ing swine dysentery, but no method for detecting this stage of the disease has been developed. *Know the source and health status of any swine you bring on your farm.*

DIAGNOSIS
A diagnosis of swine dysentery is based on clinical observation, lesions in the intestine and laboratory tests. The lesions are usually restricted to the large intestine and may involve the cecum, colon and rectum but may be present only in the colon. The contents of the colon are watery and contain mucus, fibrin and blood. The wall of the intestine is usually thickened and a fibrinous exudate may be adherent to the reddened surface of the intestine.

Laboratory isolation of the *Vibrio coli* organism is not particularly significant because it may be present in the intestinal tract of normal swine.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT
Treatment is not uniformly successful. Arsenicals (sodium arsanilate, or arsanilic acid) appear to be successful in some instances. Tylosin, neomycin, and nitrofurans also have shown efficacy at times. Mecadox (Carbadox) has recently been cleared to be used as a feed additive for the prevention and treatment of swine dysentery.

Several new drugs show great promise for the treatment of this condition but as yet have not been cleared by FDA for use in swine.

PRECAUTIONS
1. Obtain a history on herds from which breeding stock is purchased.
2. Don't purchase stock from herds which have had bloody dysentery within the last 2 years.
3. Isolate newly-purchased animals, with at least 2 fences between them and other hogs, for a period of approximately 30 days to prevent introduction of the disease into the herd.
4. Take precautions so that the care-taker does not track from the isolation pen to other hog units. Dogs and rodents may also be potential disease spreaders.
5. Avoid feed and grain that is hauled in trucks that have also been used to haul hogs, unless the truck has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

By James H. Bailey, Extension veterinarian, Cooperative Extension Service, South Dakota State University
Use of a tradename does not imply endorsement of one brand over another.

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