SYMPTOMS OF PRRS

PRRS is characterized by reproductive failure and respiratory illness.

Symptoms in breeding age swine:
- a period of anorexia
- fever
- lethargy/depression
- respiratory distress or vomiting.

There are a number of reproductive problems and symptoms associated with disease in sows, including premature births, late term abortions, and stillborn piglets.

Four to ten weeks of age is the most common age for respiratory disease from PRRS. Young pigs will often experience stunted growth. Symptoms can be cyclical and may reoccur in herds from separate infections. Reproductive infection can last for two to three months.

Older pigs have similar symptoms and may have concurrent secondary infection. This may lead to prolonged infection or repeated outbreaks of respiratory disease in herds.

These symptoms can lead to production losses in pigs of all ages. This production loss is directly responsible for economic losses sustained during a PRRS outbreak.

REFERENCES


Concerning Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatment and Prevention

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Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) is a disease in swine that is caused by a virus. The virus causes respiratory lesions in pigs of any age and reproductive failure in breeding age swine.

PRRS is the most economically damaging disease to the pork industry. One in four pigs is affected by the disease and over half of all swine have been infected by the disease.

The PRRS virus can affect any pig and is the most economically significant disease in the swine industry today.

A weakened piglet born from a PRRS infected sow. Low birth weight is a common sign of PRRS infection (Picture from Merck, 2012)

Lethargy and respiratory issues are common in breeding age pigs infected with PRRS (Picture from USDA, 2012)

Diagnosis

Clinical symptoms and herd history are the most indicative of PRRS infection during acute outbreaks. Viral isolation from microscopic lung lesions is important in determining infection activity and severity.

Detection of PRRS is best performed in affected pigs during the early stages of infection. Specimens should be collected from piglets who have not nursed, nursing sows, and febrile or anorectic postweaned pigs.

The best tissue samples should be taken from serum, lymphoid tissue (spleen and tonsils), or lung tissue. Aborted or stillborn fetuses are typically 50% positive for virus. Several tests to detect PRRSV in animals are available commercially. These tests can help determine strain virulence and severity within infected herds.

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION OF PRRS

There is no specific treatment for PRRS, though controlling secondary infection may limit losses from the disease. Broad spectrum antibiotics are available to control many of these secondary infections. Proper diagnosis of disease will ensure the most effective control and prevention of PRRS.

Prevention is the best guarantee for limiting the spread of infection. There is no one effective method for control. Several methods of control must be utilized and tailored to individual farm needs.

One method of control commonly utilized is screening the new hogs being introduced for breeding. New boars should be quarantined at least 60-90 days before introduction to the herd. Larger operations may be able to cull infected livestock and introduce new sows and boars that are uninfected.

Another common method of control is vaccination. Live and modified viral vaccines are available; however, vaccination efficacy is debatable.

Due to the variability of conditions on individual operations, experienced livestock producers should continue to expand their knowledge of treatment options and develop control plans that are effective for their individual situations.