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Clinical signs

Pruritus or itching is the most common clinical sign of sarcoptic mange or scabies and this occurs from 2-11 weeks after infestation. This has several phases starting with a non-responsive phase, followed in sequence by a delayed type hypersensitivity, hypersensitivity and a final immediate phase.

After infestation encrusted lesions develop which are rich in mites, especially on the inner surface of the ears. These can eventually cover three quarters of the ear's surface. Red papules associated with the hypersensitivity stage occur on the rump, flank and abdomen.

Hyperkeratotic mange is the most common form in adults and its lesions have been described as thick and asbestos like. Hyperkeratotic mange is often considered a disease of poor management and nutrition.

Diagnosis

Sarcoptic mange should be considered when growing pigs with red papules on their body are rubbing. Encrustations can be examined for mites.

Specific antibodies can be detected some 5-7 weeks after infestation. Herd testing is more sensitive than the testing of individual animals.

Differential diagnosis

It is essential to differentiate from other skin conditions such as parakeratosis, exudative epidermitis, dermatomycosis, niacin or biotin deficiencies, swinepox, insect bites and photosensitisation.

Treatment

A key prerequisite to treatment is recognising the condition is present in the herd. Treatment is based on the correct application of acaricides, most of which work against sarcoptic mange providing they are successfully applied. The avermectins can be administered by injection or, in the case of ivermectin, in the feed.

Elimination of sarcoptic mange from a herd is centred around three key facts – piglets are born free of mites, the mites are highly host specific and have a poor survival away from the pig and modern acaricides are very effective. Herds that are free from mange can be established by hysterectomy or Caesarean derived pigs, depopulation and repopulation from mange free sources and by the use of modern acaricides. In the case of open herds incoming pigs must be closely scrutinised for mange.