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Lesions

The lesions that will be described can be seen in pigs of all ages and their severity and distribution varies with the virulence of the causative virus.

Lesions are seen in pigs that are 4-28 days or older. The first lesions to occur are those in the lungs and lymph nodes and then microscopic lesions are seen in the kidneys and in the sow's uterus following reproductive failure. They are also seen in the boar's testicles.

In piglets infected at or before two weeks of age periocular, scrotal and subcutaneous oedema is sometimes seen. In the lungs the key finding is that of an interstitial pneumonia, but PRRS lung lesions are obscured or aggravated by those of concurrent bacterial and viral diseases.

Usually, many lymph nodes are enlarged (up to x10 normal size). Early on in the infection lymph nodes are oedematous and moderately firm. Later they are firm and white. Sometimes a perivascular myocarditis is seen, as are mild encephalitic lesions mainly in the cerebellum, cerebrum and/or brain stem.

Atrophy of seminiferous tubules in boars' testicles is sometimes seen 1-4 weeks after infection in six month old animals.

Foetal lesions

PRRS reproductive failure should be considered when litters are lost after the 100th day of gestation. Aborted litters consist of variable proportions of clinically normal piglets, small or normal sized week piglets, dead piglets showing variable degrees of autolysis and mummies. Specific foetal lesions are rare and of minimal diagnostic value.

Specific Asian lesions

In an early epidemic caused by type 2 PRRS virus lesions included petechiae and ecchymotic haemorrhages on renal cortex, hepatic capsule and visceral pleura and occasionally splenic infarcts and haematuria were seen.

As these lesions can be seen in some notifiable diseases this needs to be kept in mind when such lesions are encountered.

Back issues of Pighealth BYTES are available to download from our [website](http://www.positiveaction.co.uk).

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