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Immunity

PRRS virus infection induces a protective immunity which is slow to develop. It would appear that live virus is required. Killed vaccines and subunit proteins do not induce effective protective immunity. Induction of immunity may be age dependant. Immunity appears to be the same for both types of virus, so a vaccine based on one PRRS virus type cross protection should be possible. However, in the field, PRRS outbreaks are known to occur in herds with solid immunity from regular vaccination.

The occurrence of PRRS in weaned pigs has been linked to maternal immunity falling off.

Prevention and control

The basic objective of PRRS prevention programmes is to prevent PRRS virus getting into negative herds and variant PRRS virus strains getting into PRRS virus infected herds.

This necessitates high biosecurity standards and the quarantining and blood testing of incoming breeding stock. In high density swine areas it may be necessary to filter incoming air.

There are no specific treatments for PRRS. The objectives of PRRS control must therefore be aimed at mitigating the adverse consequences of PRRS virus effects at the various stages of production. For example gilts should have developed immunity to PRRS virus prior to their introduction into the breeding herd.

Breeding herd management necessitates the continual and consistent application of the acclimatisation of incoming gilts so as to reduce clinical signs and result in the production of PRRS negative pigs. This can be done with the use of vaccines.

Suckling piglets should have cross-fostering restricted to their first 24 hours of life to limit PRRS virus spread between litters. Nursery accommodation must be operated on an all in, all out basis. Partial depopulations can result in significant improvements to ADLWG, mortality and overall economic performance of the nursery. This process may need to be periodically repeated.

Weaner management should include the control of concurrent infections such Haemophilus parasuis, Streptococcus suis and swine influenza.

Total herd depopulations are expensive and are best considered when more than one porcine pathogen can be eliminated and the success of the exercise is unlikely to be cut short by the reintroduction of the disease(s).

Vaccines

Some vaccines against PRRS can result in protective immunity, moderate clinical signs and reduce shedding of PRRS virus. Vaccination has had variable success in the field.

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