

Pighealth BYTES

Number: 139

External parasites

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Introduction

The importance of external parasites in pig production depends very much on the production system and the climate. For example, outdoor production in a hot climate favours external parasites more than any other combination of production system and climate.

The external parasite groups of most importance in pig production are mange mites, demodectic mites, lice, fleas, mosquitoes, flies and ticks. Most external parasites cause an itchiness in the skin, which results in the pigs rubbing the affected areas. Other presenting clinical signs include depressed growth rate and skin blemishes, which can lead to trimming in the abattoir.

It should be remembered that some external parasites are vectors of microbial pathogens.

Sarcoptic mange

Worldwide, *Sarcoptes scabiei* is the most important external parasite in pig production. This parasite causes Sarcoptic mange, which is also known as scabies or sarcoptosis.

Herds afflicted by scabies have reduced growth rates, poor FCRs and breeding sows have reduced fertility. Unfortunately, the real economic impact of the disease is often not appreciated because of producers failing to detect the condition in their animals.

Clinical picture

Two clinical forms of Sarcoptic mange occur – a chronic hyperkeratotic form, which is mainly seen in sows, and a pruritic hypersensitive form, which is mainly seen in growers.

Typically for scabies the herd prevalence is high (40-90%) and the prevalence within infested herds is typically 20-90%. Modern production systems and breeders have successfully eliminated scabies from their pigs.

Pyrantel tartrate is the only tetrahydropyrimidine used in pigs for the removal of adult and infective larval stages of *Ascaris*, *Oesophagostomum* and *Hyostrogylus*.

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