

The battle against PCV2 – the age of miracles is not past!

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After a period around 2003-5 when weaner mortality from PMWS reached disastrously high levels, we have now had a few years where PMWS/PCV2 does not seem to have had such a big influence. But, if you see a lot of pig farms, you do not have to look very far before you realise that things are always changing.

Many herds are continuing to experience unacceptably high losses among both weaners and fatteners and, in a significant number of cases, the problem has spread to the fattening unit. Typically, the pigs are fine when they arrive but, over a period of a few weeks, about 5-10% will fall behind.

Symptoms

The symptoms in these pigs vary, but paleness and intermittent diarrhoea may be seen and problems controlling APP infections occur.

Affected pigs usually become chronically unthrifty and either die or have to be culled.

Pigs with PCV2 typically weigh 60kg, whereas their healthier counterparts weigh 100kg. At autopsy, pigs are often found to have stomach ulcers, and these may be accompanied by virus-induced lung lesions.

Until the end of last year, optimisation of

Period	Daily liveweight gain (g)	Mortality (%)
2005	502	5.2
2006	511	4.4
2007	557	5.8
1.1.2008-31.3.2008	551	3.1
1.4.2008-17.5.2008	554	1.3

Table 1. Computerised production records from the weaner nursery.

feed and hygiene conditions and effective control of other diseases, especially PRRS, were our most important weapons in the fight against PCV2.

Boehringer Ingelheim then introduced a new vaccine, Ingelvac CircoFlex, to the Danish market for use in piglets.

Ingelvac CircoFlex is registered for use in pigs from two weeks of age, which means that vaccination can be carried out in the farrowing house 1-2 weeks prior to weaning or even at the time of weaning.

Initial experience from both Denmark and other countries shows that the vaccine remains effective right up to the time of slaughter, even if it is given early.

Results

Over a period of several years, a 650-sow multi-site farrow-to-finish operation has had

problems with PCV2-associated excess mortality during both weaning and fattening phases.

The health status of the herd is good (SPF + Myc) and the incidence of mycoplasma and other infections is very low owing to the multi-site structure and the use of a three week batch management system.

The fattening facilities are operated on an all-in/all-out basis at farm level.

The high mortality levels have been very frustrating as a large number of initiatives have been taken to achieve good health status and productivity.

Lots of things have been tried to reduce the mortality figures but none have made much difference.

Vaccination

At the end of December 2007, a programme was started to vaccinate all pigs with Boehringer's Ingelvac CircoFlex at weaning.

Most of the mortality for the first quarter of 2008 was accounted for by unvaccinated pigs who died in January.

After the first batch of pigs had been vaccinated, the mortality figure immediately fell to below 1.5%.

The pigs are showing more uniform growth and mortality remains at the very low level that has been achieved in the weaner nursery. ■