



New Guidance for Hog Handling at Packing Plants

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service has introduced new guidance to address concerns about hog handling procedures at packing plants.

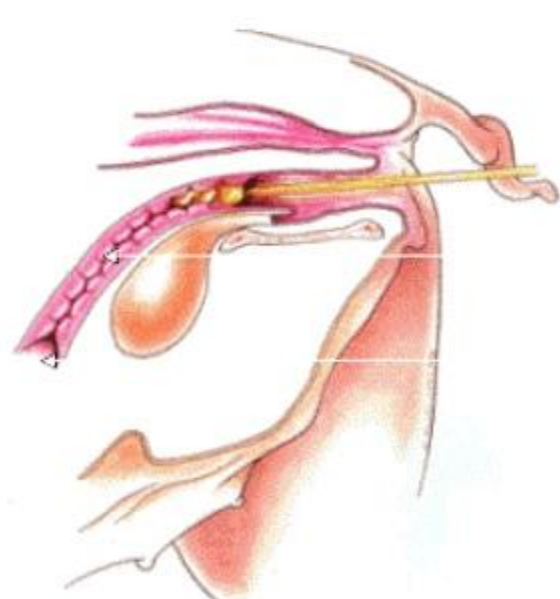
The guidance—FSIS Compliance Guide for a Systematic Approach to the Humane Handling of Livestock—supports the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. Proper implementation of this guidance will better ensure the humane treatment of livestock presented for slaughter, as it provides establishments a set of practices that will assist them in minimizing excitement, discomfort and accidental injury.

"We have taken significant measures over the last few years to strengthen our ability to enforce humane handling laws at livestock slaughter facilities nationwide" says FSIS Administrator Al Almanza. "The guidance is one example of our commitment to the humane treatment of animals. We continue to implement improvements so that we have the best system possible."

This new guidance was developed to address the humane handling incidents cited in the spring 2013 Office of Inspector General report. As of this year, half of all livestock slaughter establishments have adopted the systematic approach to humane handling, meeting the agency's strategic objective three years early. The agency will continue to implement additional best practices to support the humane treatment of animals.

In addition to this guidance, the agency is further equipping employees to prevent and respond to inhumane handling incidents by delivering a more practical, situation-based humane handling training to inspectors and veterinarians who verify and enforce humane handling requirements at hundreds of livestock slaughter establishments across the country.

FSIS began delivering this enhanced training in 2010, and the agency will continue to deliver this training to new employees. The training presents a variety of realistic animal-handling scenarios that employees may encounter, from truck unloading, to stunning, to post-stunning. FSIS recently created a Humane Handling Enforcement Coordinator position, who oversees the agency's implementation and daily enforcement of humane handling requirements. Also, the agency created the Department-level Ombudsman position, which provides a neutral forum for the agency's field personnel and other stakeholders to report humane handling concerns that have not been addressed by the standard agency reporting mechanisms.



Deep Uterine Insemination in Swine

A newer reproductive practice has attracted the attention of the show pig industry, "Deep Uterine Insemination". The new technique is actually a combination of two existing technologies, artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer. Basically, the non-surgical procedure involves passing a small, highly specialized catheter through the cervix and into the uterus of the sow. Once the catheter is situated properly, semen can be deposited. The technique sounds simple enough so why all the excitement?

The technology may provide important advantages to the swine breeder. In standard AI programs which use ~80 cc of liquid extended semen, much of the semen dose (actually 65%) leaks out following extended. This means that the majority of the valuable semen is wasted and has no chance of fertilizing eggs. In contrast, Deep Uterine Insemination minimizes leaking due to the double advantage of deep semen placement far inside the uterus and the considerably smaller volumes used (< 20 cc). Although it is not clear how much sperm is actually retained, less leakage results and this has the potential to increase the reproductive impact of breeding on numbers of pregnancies and pigs produced per sow.

Deep Uterine Insemination technology is also anticipated to provide benefits for the semen supplier. Increased sales of semen units of valuable semen from superior sires, which are lower in sperm number and volume would be expected. This smaller unit of sale will be expected to result in a pregnancy and a litter size at levels comparable to larger volumes and numbers of sperm. This means that any sire could be used more widely and effectively, with greater accessibility to clientele. This is good because more effective utilization of boars and semen output can be achieved with lower input costs and fewer numbers of boars.

During the development and adoption of any new technology, problems during the period of learning are expected. This technique will take longer to perform and require more patience and skill to achieve optimal results when compared to standard AI procedures. Further, failure to maintain high levels of hygiene or care when placing the catheter into the uterus could result in introduction of disease or damage to the uterus. It is also reported that not all catheters can be equally passed on all females. The younger females tend to be harder to perform the technique with, as their cervix is smaller. It is likely that that most AI technicians today are not at the required skill level to perform this test routinely in order to achieve comparable rates of reproduction. Therefore specialized technicians will need to be developed for this program.

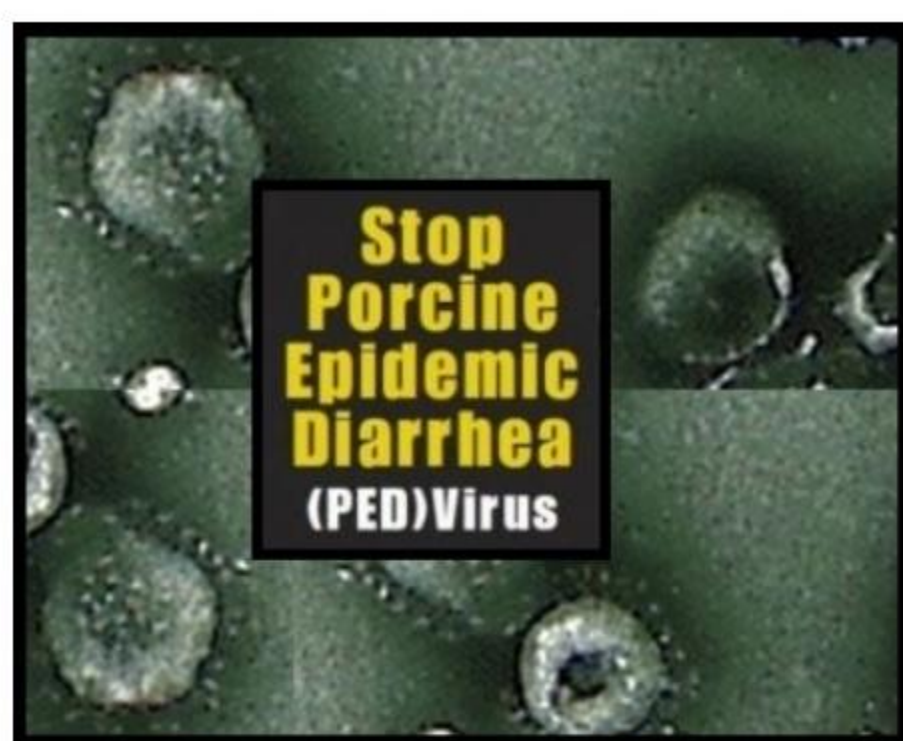
Boar studs and semen suppliers must come to grips with new processing, packaging and delivery systems that maintain high semen fertility. The existing systems for the most part were perfected for conventional AI. Further, the pricing system may need to be evaluated since some customers will purchase the smaller doses for Deep Uterine Insemination while the majority of customers will still need the volume and number of sperm in a conventional AI dose. How will the pricing system be structured to maintain profit level with the disparity in the unit of product purchased between the two systems?

Who will utilize this technology? It will most likely be adopted where the price and labor for using this technique can be justified. The Deep Uterine Insemination technique will fit in and evolve in the short and long run of pork production. However, it is certain that if improvements in the fertility of frozen boar semen can reach the levels obtained routinely with frozen cattle and human semen, then reproductive methods for the swine industry could become quickly revolutionized.



Featured Livestock Judging Team

Western Illinois University
High Senior Team at the 2013 National Barrow Show



Cold Weather Spikes PED Virus

Cooler weather seems to have caused a dramatic spike in cases of porcine epidemic diarrhea (PED) virus, according to a report by Reuters. PED virus has spread to about 250 farms since June, Tom Ray, North Carolina director of livestock health, told Reuters on Thursday. While the disease continues to spread, Ray said it appears the rate of spread is slowing. "We have about 250 positive swine farms," Ray says. "Probably about three of four weeks ago, we went from normally two to three cases in a week to three new reports in a day. That has actually started to go back to smaller numbers per week." Ray says up to 150,000 sows could be affected. The disease is fatal to baby pigs, with the death rate in some litters up to 80%. "It is definitely up," he says of the number of infected farms, however, locating farms with the disease has been difficult because PED virus is a disease that is not required to be reported.

As of Sept. 1, North Carolina had 8.7 million hogs, including a breeding herd of 870,000 head, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. PED virus is not harmful to humans nor is it transmissible through pork. It has occurred in Europe and Asia, but this is the first year that it has been seen in the United States. "You have a (hog) population that is naive because it has never been exposed to this disease before," Ray says. "Not having this virus before, you are going to have more losses initially. We're really holding our collective breaths because the virus has a tendency to peak in cooler weather in the winter," he says. "It is definitely on the rise, but so is the immunity," he says of the number of cases. "But we had a slower rise in the last week or so than about two to three weeks ago."

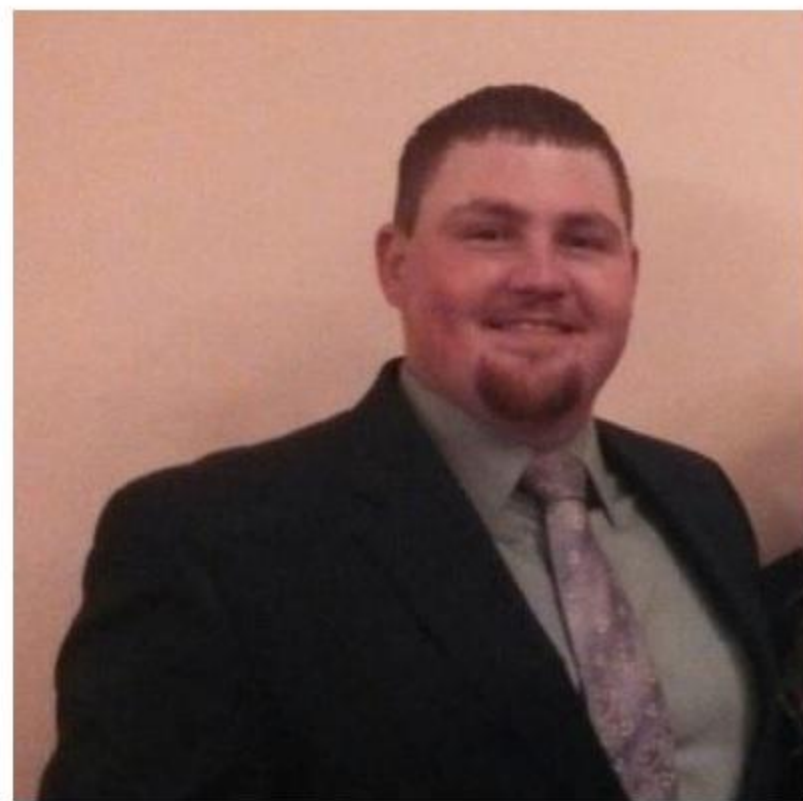
The death of baby pigs from the disease will mean fewer market hogs next spring. Heather Jones, senior agribusiness analyst at BBT Capital markets, estimates losses in North Carolina from the disease could cut weekly hog slaughter next spring by 1 to 1.5%. Longer-term pig losses from the disease should decrease as herds become immune to it and the pork industry develops vaccines to cope with it, Ray says. "Eventually it is going to be the new-normal production disease," he adds.



Featured Oct. 2013 Prospect Yorkshire Gilt Class

Official Placing: 4-1-3-2
Cuts: 4-3-2

For more information on the Oct. 2013 Prospect York Gilt class of the month, visit our home page. Each month The Judging Connection.com features a class of the month and a judge from our directory. The public is allowed to vote on the class of the month. The official results of the class is determined from the featured judge of the month.



Featured October Judge

Seth Ebert
Jeromesville, Ohio

Seth Judges Swine.

Seth was a member of the livestock judging team at Casper College as well as Colorado State University. Seth is also a member of the NSR and showed in the Buckeye Show Circuit. He received several top ten honors while judging in college.



Featured Livestock Judging Individual

Jamie Bobell
(Western Illinois University)
6th High Senior College Individual at the 2013 NBS



Introducing Our New Judges

Bill Brown: Dairy Cattle Judge from Topeka, KS (left)
Ben Weikert: Beef and Sheep Judge from Gettysburg, PA. (right)
Judd Shearer: Goat Judge from Lakeville, OH. (not pictured)

Special Thanks To This Months New Newsletter Subscribers

6 New Subscribers for the Month!



Happy Thanksgiving From TheJudgingConnection.com

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