SVC Newsletter
October 2001 Edition

SVC’s phone and fax numbers will change on November 9th. Please note:

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Anthrax in Swine??
What You Should Know

We’ve had questions from clients about anthrax in pigs, so we thought we should give you some background information. Pigs can be infected with anthrax, but they are more resistant to infection than other species and are rarely exposed to the bacterium. However, there are historical large-scale exposures in the U.S. from feed containing contaminated meat and bone meal.

The likelihood of infection in pigs is very remote, but it is possible and there are some signs that are typical of anthrax infection. The most common form in swine is called “pharyngeal anthrax”. The infection is localized in the lymph nodes of the throat region causing rapid swelling and edema with subsequent difficulty in breathing and swallowing. There are also rare cases of intestinal and septicemic infections.

Clinical signs of anthrax include:
- Sudden death
- Swelling in the throat
- Difficulty with breathing and swallowing
- Fever
- Listlessness
- Occasional vomiting

Dead pigs might not develop rigor mortis and there may be bloody discharges from the natural body openings because anthrax interferes with blood clotting. Younger pigs may simply appear pale or bleached out.

Because of the human health risk and the ability of the anthrax bacterium to form spores that survive for decades, it’s important to NOT perform a post mortem exam on suspected infected pigs. **Call your veterinarian immediately if you suspect anthrax in your herd. There is also a 24-hour hotline at the Minnesota Department of Health if anthrax is suspected: 612-676-5414.**

We are actually more concerned about other unusual diseases right now that could threaten our industry. Now more than ever, it is important for you to take biosecurity VERY SERIOUSLY on your farms. Review farm policies with your staff (see checklist on next page) and be on the lookout for ANY unusual signs of disease. Please don’t hesitate to call us if you have any questions or concerns.
The October newsletter of the South Dakota Animal Industry Board points out that veterinarians, producers and local allied industries may well be the first line of detection and response to bioterrorist or chemical weapons of mass destruction events. Whether such events are directed at man and animals, or simply animals or plants, veterinarians and those at the production level may be the first to detect and respond. So it’s very important that all of us strive to keep abreast of current information regarding prevention and preparedness.

Use this checklist when reviewing your farm’s biosecurity preventative measures:

- Entrance limited?
- Locked premises?
- Authorized entry?
- Integrity of Deliveries?
- Inspection for tampering with supplies?
- Control of non-essential traffic and visitors?
- Records of all visits and deliveries?
- Personnel records and monitoring?
- Names and phone numbers of key contact personnel to report suspicious activities?
- Employee awareness training?
- Containment/decontamination procedures?
- Recognition and reporting of unusual animal or zoonotic conditions?
- Recognition and reporting of any mysterious substances, vehicles, persons?
- Missing supplies, equipment, vehicles; report immediately?
  - Vandalism, unusual damage to facilities, or possible tampering?
  - Presence of any unaccountable supplies, chemicals, biologicals, equipment, animals, animal products?

Pork: The most frequently eaten meat in America!

Americans eat pork more regularly than chicken or beef, according to the National Eating Trends Survey of 2000. On the average, Americans eat pork 5 times every 2 weeks whereas beef is eaten 3.7 times and chicken is eaten 2.6 times every 2 weeks.

SVC’s Dr. Ross Kiehne was among the speakers at the 1st Annual Midwest Pork Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana on September 7, 2001. His topic was “Maximizing Finishing Potential”. The conference was sponsored by the Pork Producers councils of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky and Ohio. Ken Parnell, vice president of meat, seafood and deli of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. also addressed the group. Here are some highlights from his presentation.

Wal-Mart expects to open 180 new Super Centers in the next year (includes a full grocery). These one-stop shopping centers have been very successful in Rochester, Worthington and the Twin Cities. An important component of the Super Centers is their full service meat departments, consisting primarily of “case-ready” products (delivered to Wal-Mart already cut and packaged). One of the biggest surprises was that ground pork consumption rose nearly 300% when it became a case-ready product. Other important advantages of case-ready meat are that no human hands touch the product after processing, and packaging is leak-proof.

Wal-Mart uses a system that makes these products completely traceable - every store knows the exact quantity sold of each product. The stores order directly from the processor rather than from a warehouse site which allows for a 72-hour turnaround time from order to delivery. In the future, each package will be able to be traced all the way back to the farm of product origination - an easier task with case-ready.

To date, Wal-Mart reports that there have been no recalls of any of its pork products and they have had ZERO complaint letters regarding pork sold at their stores. Sales have risen 20% in the existing stores and Mr. Parnell attributes this to the increased amount of shelf space given to meat products which is much higher in a Wal-Mart Super Center than in other shopping outlets.

Case-ready also allows packages to have the same weights. This standardizes the whole process and the consumer pays the same price for the same amount of meat EVERY TIME (no variation in weight, therefore no variation in price).

Overall, Mr. Parnell was very positive about the outlook for pork products based on their safety and consistency. He expressed concerns about animal rights and animal welfare in that these are becoming very important topics for both the meat production industry and Wal-Mart as a meat retailer. Also, although the consistency of hogs being produced today is already very good, we must continue to focus on and improve in this area to keep the consumer satisfied.