A Cross-Company Approach to PRRS

Point of production: Breed to Finish
Country of Origin: Belgium

Theme: Health

There are many different vaccination strategies and routes of application that can be implemented to improve health on farms. Detecting gaps in knowledge will aid understanding in what is needed in the future to improve health management in pig production.

The solution - Best practice

The farms: There was an unstable PRRS situation at a number of pig farms in Belgium. Thirteen farms (rearing, sow and finishing) in the same region decided to work together to stabilise farm health. Researchers supported the farmers' efforts.

The system: Information exchange and joint strategy is key to this approach. A joint vaccination strategy has been implemented in combination with improved biosecurity status at the individual farms and information about diseases and other relevant problems are shared. PRRS strains are typed so that biosafety leaks can be detected. Based on the individual results of audits, an individual plan for each farm has been set up.

Key points:

- Farms are screened twice per year for the presence of PRRS and farmers gather to discuss results with an expert
- Increased awareness of the importance of biosafety and continuous monitoring by the farmers e.g. quarantine strategies, disinfectant techniques etc.
- Awareness that solving general health problems and specific PRRS issues requires a holistic approach
- All farms have the same veterinarian
- All farms use the same vaccines and vaccine schedule
- A future aim is to use the same sire line at all the farms

Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus (PRRS) is an economically significant pathogen found across the globe. Coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, tear staining, poor appetite and fading are the major presenting signs.

Cost/Benefit analysis

Benefits:

√ 2.5 more piglets weaned per sow
√ More than 5% increase in piglet weaning weight
√ 5% increase in daily live weight gain in weaners
√ 5% better feed conversion rate in finishers
√ Gross margin increase of 12.6%
√ Reduction in production costs of pig meat by 4.9%

Costs:

- Veterinarian time and medicine costs (euro/sow/year) are 32.7% higher
- Labour time and therefore cost increased

Additional information

The above best practice does not just lend itself to tackling PRRS. Collaborative strategies between farmers coupled with well-planned vaccination protocols and effective diagnostic investigation are the main factors contributing to controlling and monitoring disease outbreaks.

The prophylatic use of vaccines is an important tool to prevent clinical disease and losses in pig production. It results in lower medicine costs to treat sick pigs and prevents a reduced production performance as a result of disease.

Further Research & Project Links
https://eupig.eu/
Link to technical report
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