



WHAT TO DO WITH A LAME PIG

Here it is that time of year again when pigs start limping. About this time last year we published an article that discussed the causes of crippled pigs. I want to clarify the fact that the term PPLO stands for Pleuropneumonia like organism and refers only to Mycoplasma Hyosynovia. We have, however, used that word in the show pig industry for years as a descriptive term for any disease that causes pigs to be lame.

Since I want to dedicate this article to things that might be done to the pigs to prevent and treat the problem, I won't spend too many lines on the causes. Here is a brief list of the major causes: Bacteria (including Mycoplasma, Strep, and various others) trauma, physitis, OCD, rapid growth rate, nutrition, conformation, and various muscle problems. With this list in mind, we will begin looking at ways to decrease the chances of having a crippled hog or what to do if you get one.

Here are some things that may help decrease your chances of getting a crippled hog. Feeding medicated feed. I prefer Lincocin in the feed at a dosage of 40 grams per ton. If you have a way of getting 200 grams per ton in the feed for the first few weeks after weaning and perhaps for the first few weeks the piglets are at their new home, it may be of even more help.

Do not feed for excessive growth rate too early in the feeding period. If we get a fast growth rate in combination with previous vascular insult from early bacterial infections in the bone and cartilage, we will increase the risk of the cartilage becoming thin and brittle and then tearing. This is especially true in hogs that have a straight conformation in the hocks.

Along these same lines is the issue of exercise. We have bred these hogs up to the point that their muscle mass is stronger than the skeleton. It is likely that these critters can rip the attachments of the muscles from the bones if they are allowed or forced to exercise excessively. I seem to see more muscle tears and sprains in hogs that are housed on concrete with little dirt to rest on.

I have heard of some people that are feeding Gelatin or Glucosamine products in a preventive form. This may have some merit in supplying the matrix for cartilage growth and health. These products are available at health food stores but

to my knowledge have not been approved for use in hogs. Since they are natural products, I'm not sure what kind of withdrawals may be indicated. I have seen these products used in treatment and prevention with some success.

Now let's go over what to do when you go out and find your prize pig limping. There are a few things that I think are mandatory in treatment of the disease. With all the treatments

listed here, you would think that at least one of them would fix nearly any hog, but that is not the case. Some pigs obtain so much cartilage or capsular damage that any form of treatment is futile.

The first thing to do is to put the hog in the smallest place you can find. Something as small as a farrowing crate is just right. While here, examine the toes and feet closely for things like interdigital warts and growths or various types of infectious or traumatic processes. The pig should be left in this area for at least two weeks. While here, the growth rate must be slowed down.

Many of these pigs have an inflammatory reaction occurring in the growth plate and if the growth rate is not decreased, they may not get well or may wind up with a crooked or shortened leg. Slowed growth can be accomplished by lowering the protein and carbohydrate concentration in the feed. Be sure not to over-supplement minerals and vitamins. As with most things, a little is good and a lot is too much. I also try to stay away from dietary supplements that seem too good to be true; they usually are.

I recommend giving every acutely lame pig Lincocin, Excenel, and Pred-f. These drugs are all approved in pigs. You should observe the label dose and all appropriate withdrawal times. These drugs should be given for 7 days, even if the lameness symptoms subside. They are not always effective but they are often beneficial. The pig should be in the confined area when the injections are given in order to keep the pig from furthering any damage while struggling.

Some pigs will be helped by one or two injections of BO-SE. All that is needed is the label dose and one or two injections. Both Vitamin E and selenium are stored in the liver for many days and over-dosing this product can lead to problems that are as bad or worse than the initial lameness. If you do not see any results for a couple of injections, you are most



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likely not going to see any results at all. I have found that injections of this product at about twice the label dose at weaning is sometimes beneficial in heading off some types of muscle problems that may develop as the pig ages.

If a joint is noticeably swollen, hydrotherapy may be of benefit. This is a big word for running water from a hose on the affected area. It is not unlike what the physical therapist do to the people with strains and sprains when they put the leg in a whirlpool. I think this has almost unbelievable results at times. I would not recommend using DMSO on a pig. It contains sulfur and is not approved for use in food animals. Some people use products like Icy Hot or Ben Gay with limited success.

Products such as Adequan and Legend are frequently used in treatment of lame hogs. The idea is scientifically sound and I have seen response in a few cases. Remember, even though these products are natural substances, they have not been approved for use in hogs

and therefore no withdrawal times have been established.

Aspirin is a drug that seems to bring the inflammation out of swollen joints in pigs. I have recommended its use in the past and think it works well. The best thing to know is that it does need to be discontinued at least 4 days prior to a terminal show. Because of this, I would recommend starting at a high dose and gradually decreasing the amount given in order to prevent an abrupt increase in pain prior to the show.

I believe that the cause of a lame pig is usually multi-factoral. There are usually many small things coming together to result in one big problem with locomotion. Some things such as conformation and extreme muscle mass are beyond our ability to change. Other things such as infectious agents, trauma, rapid growth rate, excessive nutrition, and future genetics are within our treatment goals.

You will have a good chance of recovery if you catch the problem early

and treat it aggressively in the series of steps that are described. Make sure that you have established a good relationship with your veterinarian and Ag teacher / 4-H leaders in order to get the medications that are needed and have help monitoring the progress and treatment of the problem. We have an active equine practice and have learned many of the things we use on the hogs from the procedure on horses. If you have any questions or know of some other treatments that have been effective, give me a call; 806-872-3183.

Dr. Bo has been writing for Purple Circle for years. Thanks for all your help and support over the years!

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