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Evaluating Supplement Iron Protocols

Pigs are born with very limited iron reserves (50 milligrams) and sow's milk is a poor source of iron, supplying about 1 milligram (mg) of iron per pig per day. For optimal growth, pigs utilize an estimated 7-16 mg of iron per day, depending on growth rate. As herds continue to become more productive with increasing litter size and piglet growth rate, it's important to evaluate iron supplementation practices to ensure that you avoid piglet anemia in your herd.

Pigs that have inadequate iron are considered anemic. Visually, pigs with moderate to severe anemia display several signs including: a roughened hair coat, wrinkled skin, lethargy, and most notably pallor of skin and extremities. Labored breathing and mortality can be observed in severe cases. Subclinical anemia, which may not lead to such overt signs, is often caused by inadequate supplementation or increased utilization by the pig, and has the potential to reduce growth and increase disease susceptibility both pre and post-weaning.

A typical protocol would consist of a 200 mg dose of iron dextran delivered through an intramuscular injection between day 1 and 3 following birth. However, recent research suggests that additional iron may be needed to avoid anemia and maximize post-weaning performance.

Hemoglobin status at weaning	200mg processing	200mg birth + 200mg processing
Clinical anemia (<9 g/dl)	26%	5%
Subclinical anemia (9-11 g/dl)	66%	31%
Optimal (>11 g/dl)	8%	64%

Live weight, lbs	200mg processing	200mg birth + 200mg processing
Birth	3.41[a]	3.39[a]
Weaning	11.9[a]	12.3[b]
8 weeks post-wean	63.6[a]	65.2[b]
18 weeks post-wean	213.2[a]	216.3[b]

Fredericks et al. 2018 AASV Annual Meeting

On one commercial sow farm, 16,551 piglets were sorted by birthweight and allocated to one of two treatment groups. Group A received 200 mg of iron dextran at processing (day 5-7). Group B received 200 mg within 24 hours of birth and 200 mg at processing. Hemoglobin status at weaning and body weight at multiple time points were analyzed. Pigs that received 200 mg at birth and 200 mg at processing had fewer clinically and sub-clinically anemic pigs at weaning. Additionally, pigs that received 200 mg at birth and 200 mg at processing were significantly heavier at weaning, 8 weeks post-wean, and 18 weeks post-wean.

If anemia is a concern within your herd, it's important that hemoglobin testing be part of the full diagnostic work-up. Determining hemoglobin concentration often has required that samples be sent to a diagnostic laboratory to be evaluated. However, a handheld device used in the human medical field has recently become available to use. The HemoCue Hb 201+ (HemoCue AB, Angelholm, Sweden) system allows for quick and accurate hemoglobin analysis to be completed on-farm.

While providing supplemental iron to suckling piglets has been a routine practice for decades, it would be beneficial to review your current program and fine-tune protocols if necessary. Contact your SVC vet for more information.

SVC Office Hours: Monday through Friday 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM

Online Ordering Is Now Available!

Swine Vet Center has partnered with Prairie Systems and created an online ordering system called Smart Order. Place an order anytime, anywhere you have a computer or mobile device. Personalize your account with frequently ordered products, view recent orders, and duplicate previous orders to make reorders quick and easy.

Contact Tina at the clinic to get set up with an account today!

507-934-3970 or tkennedy@swinevetcenter.com

Swine Vet Center Launches New Website for Pork Industry

Swine Vet Center, a clinic with 15 veterinarians focused on pig health, has launched a new website to keep its customers and the pork industry posted on its latest services, ideas and initiatives.

"For us, nothing will ever replace face-to-face contact with our customers, but we wanted to expand our online presence and help the pork industry develop a better understanding of who we are and our approach to swine medicine," said Laura Bruner, DVM, a veterinarian at SVC who was actively involved with the website's development.

In addition to new veterinarian profiles and an overview of SVC's services, the site features sections called SVC News, which includes articles written by or involving the clinic's veterinarians. The new website also features PHT+, a news feed curated by the editors of Pig Health Today.

Swine Vet Center also announced that it was developing a new e-newsletter to keep the pork industry updated on the latest trends and ideas in pig health. To subscribe, go to https://swinevetcenter.com/newsletter/

Swine Vet Center has come a long way since 1990 — when three veterinarians hung out a shingle in St. Peter, Minnesota, to service the flourishing pork industry in the Midwest. The clinic's customers have changed, too. Today the clinic serves producers in many states, ranging from major pork-production companies with 25,000 to 150,000+ sows to traditional family farms with 500 to 2,400 sows.

For more information, visit www.swinevetcenter.com