THE PIG ISSUE

Garth Pig Practice Ltd

November 2025

Welcome to our November Edition

The Garth Pig Health Scheme

As part of our herd health and performance monitoring, we have developed an internal surveillance program based on systematic abattoir inspections. During these inspections, the following pathological findings are recorded: EP-like lesions, viral pneumonia distribution, pleuropneumonia, lung abscesses, pyaemia, pleurisy, milk spot, tail bites, carcass abscess, skin papular dermatitis, pericarditis, peritonitis. The evaluation of lesions in pig carcasses is important for identifying potential health issues. Many of these conditions have been associated with a reduction in performance traits and consequent increases in production costs, with respiratory related issues being the main group of findings among them.

Respiratory diseases are a leading cause of economic losses in the swine industry, attributable to increased mortality rates, decreased average daily weight gain, condemnation of carcasses in slaughterhouses, and the expenses incurred for their control and prevention.

Pleurisy, an inflammation of the lung surface membranes (pleura), is a common finding during post-mortem meat inspections. During infection, the pleura - the lining that surrounds the lungs and the chest cavity become inflamed and rub together. These adhesions can be observed during post-mortem evaluations of pig carcasses in slaughterhouses. Many infectious organisms can be involved in causing pleurisy, including PRRSV, APP, PCV-2 *Streptococcus suis,* Haemophilus parasuis and Pasteurella multocida. Non-infectious factors such as environmental stressors and poor management also play a role. Pleurisy results in extra processing costs at the abattoir because of the extra trimming required to separate the lungs from the carcass wall and increased costs of disposal. To compensate for these additional costs, some processors automatically deduct weight from the carcass if severe pleurisy is evident.

Pleurisy can be difficult to diagnose on farm and may only be apparent at slaughter. Affected pigs may cough and be lethargic, with a reduced appetite, but these signs are not specific to pleurisy. Environmental conditions, management factors, population size, and factors such as age and genetics all can contribute to the development of pleurisy.

Two years of regular abattoir checks have provided valuable data to improve pig health, welfare, and carcass quality. The highest prevalence of pleurisy was observed in spring months March and April, highlighting the influence of environmental factors on respiratory disease development. These findings reinforce the importance of environmental factors in respiratory disease dynamics. Weather conditions, lower ventilation during colder months, take part in the process of developing pleurisy. Optimise stocking levels and ventilation in your buildings, ensuring draughts are avoided. Strict all-in all-out (AIAO) production from weaning to slaughter is associated with reduced pleurisy incidence. Ensuring thorough cleaning, disinfection, and resting of pens between batches—can mitigate the risk of severe pleurisy.

Routine abattoir-based health surveillance, as implemented through the Garth Pig Health Scheme, enables early identification of herd-level health issues, supports targeted interventions, and informs management practices to improve animal health, welfare, and carcass quality. **Please contact the practice or speak to your vet if you would like to know more about the Garth Pig Health Scheme or to sign up to it.**

Ileitis - diagnosis and prevention

Lawsonia intracellularis is a bacterium widely present on pig farms and is the cause of ileitis, an intestinal disease that can quietly affect herd health and performance. Because it often goes unnoticed, ileitis can lead to slower growth rates, poorer feed conversion and ultimately reduced profitability.

Ileitis can present in three forms:

- Subclinical - the most common form. Pigs may appear healthy but grow more slowly and convert feed less efficiently.

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- Chronic - May cause mild diarrhoea or uneven growth rates across the group.
- Acute - a more severe, sometimes fatal form, often affecting gilts or pigs near slaughter weight. Signs include black or bloody faeces.

Stress factors such as moving pigs or changes in weather can turn a mild or unnoticed infection into a clinical problem.

Diagnosis of ileitis should be based on the clinical picture, postmortem examinations and laboratory tests. At our practice, if we suspect ileitis, we test faecal samples to confirm the presence of the Lawsonia intracellularis. These tests not only verify infection but also help assess the overall level of disease activity within the herd. When results indicate a significant infection, prompt treatment and management interventions are recommended to prevent further losses.

Antibiotics can be used to treat confirmed cases, but prevention is far more effective. Good biosecurity remains essential. Simple measures like all-in/all-out management, effective cleaning between batches, and quarantine of incoming stock all help to limit disease spread.

Vaccination is a proven way to control ileitis and improve herd performance.

We can use Porcilis Lawsonia vaccine, administered either by injection or IDAL device, that provides protection from three weeks of age. Protection develops within 2-3 weeks of vaccination and lasts up to 20 weeks, covering most of the growing period. This vaccine can be administered mixed with Porcilis PCV-MHyo i/m or Porcilis PCV ID just before use so where these vaccines are being used anyway the additional cover for Lawsonia can be added with almost no extra labour. Alternatively, we can use Enterisol in water, but this requires an antibiotic-free window around the time of administration.

Producers using ileitis vaccine have reported:

- Improved growth rates
- Better feed conversion ratios (FCR)
- Reduced need for antibiotic treatments so leading to cost savings

Interestingly, while some pigs may still show mild looseness post-vaccination, overall performance gains are clear. In herds where FCR is monitored, we consistently see a strong return on investment. Some studies have also shown a reduced incidence of tail biting in some cases. On those farms, it's likely that ileitis was causing a degree of gut pain, which stressed the pigs.

Any decision to vaccinate and the choice of vaccine should be made in discussion with your unit vet.

Christmas and New Year Opening Times

Integra Office

Christmas Eve: Office will shut at 3pm.

Christmas Day: Office closed.

Boxing Day: Office closed.

Monday 29th December: Reopens. normal hours.

New Years Eve: Office will shut at 3pm.

Friday 2nd January: Office closed.

Out of hours emergency cover.

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Dover Port Health Authority posted in September that they seized 10 tonnes of illegal meat in just 2 weeks!

This is still likely to be only the tip of the iceberg.

The port authority continues to press for immediate government action. This failure to protect the UK border leaves the country massively at risk of ASF and Foot and Mouth incursions.

Please enforce staff rules on no pork products on units – you cannot be sure of their provenance and ASF in particular, survives incredibly well in meat. It only takes a discarded sandwich to potentially cause an ASF outbreak.