

Taking Proper Precautions Prior to County Fair and Exhibition Events Can Help Safeguard Animal Health

Consider Vaccination and Biosecurity Protocols for the 2014 Show Season

As county fairs and livestock exhibitions start preparing for the 2014 show season in Michigan it is important to review, consider and implement vaccination and biosecurity protocols prior to tagging or weigh-in events. Fair and event managers, along with swine superintendents should be aware of the various animal health risks, including Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) and Swine Influenza that have been present in both small farm and commercial pigs and to discuss the best methods for reducing disease transmission for pigs that will be exhibited this summer at livestock events.

Vaccinations:

If it is possible, encourage youth to purchase pigs from a breeder that currently has a vaccination program for their herd. This way historical information, herd health status and veterinarian recommendations can be taken into account when vaccinating. If the breeder of the pigs does not have a vaccination program in place youth can work with their veterinarian to ensure that their animals receive the correct vaccines. Dr. Madonna Gemus, Swine Extension Veterinarian with Michigan State University suggests that youth producers vaccinate for Circovirus (PCV-2) and Influenza (SIV) at minimum. Many breeders also include vaccines for Erysipelas and Mycoplasma hyopneumonia.

A vaccine program will help provide protection for exhibition pigs from common swine diseases. Circovirus is commonly found in commercial herds and cause loss of body condition, unthriftiness and rough hair coats. Swine Influenza is most often expressed as a common cold in pigs and is characterized by elevated temperatures and respiratory rates, along with off feed events. Certain strains of this virus are also zoonotic, making it possible for the virus to transfer from pigs to humans, resulting in a public health concern. Vaccinating for Erysipelas in feeder pigs can reduce incidence of lameness caused by bacterial infection. Vaccination for Mycoplasma hyopneumonia will reduce the incidence of pneumonia and reduced growth common in pigs derived from positive herds or herds in high Mycoplasma dense areas. As with most vaccines, this will not guarantee that your pigs will not be exposed to the different diseases, however if your animals do become exposed it will help reduce the severity and incidence rate of the disease, which is important when achieving maximum growth of your animal.

This initial vaccine dose should be given to the animals before purchase or shortly after they arrive at the new owner's farm. A second or booster dose of the vaccine should be given to the pigs a few weeks following the initial dose. The number of days between the initial dose and booster dose should be no less than 21 days and no more than 50 days. This will help ensure that your pigs have protection through exhibition and market. Currently a 4 way vaccine (Circo, SIV, Erysipelas, Mycoplasma) can be sourced for around \$2.50 per dose from local veterinarians and can be administered by a parent or responsible adult, following proper injection protocols.

Biosecurity: Risk Factors and Points of Infection:

When looking at the possibility of disease spread and health risks for exhibition pigs it is important to review biosecurity protocols and procedures. The highest risk of disease transfer comes when pigs from different sources are comingled with each other at a single location. Good examples of these are weigh-

ins or tagging events for swine projects at a county fair. These events may not allow for nose-to-nose contact of the pigs, however disease and viruses can still “hitch a ride” on people, various objects or be tracked from place to place in manure. If such an event is scheduled for your county fair it is important to eliminate as many risk factors as possible and establish guidelines for those helping with these activities.

Create a protocol where the tagging/vaccinating person(s) entering the trailer wears disposable (Tyvek) coveralls, disposable or rubber boots and gloves. Once the person has completed the tagging and vaccination process they should wait until the pigs have quieted down or are on the front portion of the trailer, before exiting the trailer, eliminating the risk of a pig exiting the trailer and being exposed to other pigs and manure. An important rule of thumb is to leave as much organic matter (manure and bedding) in the trailer as possible; this eliminates other people tracking infected manure throughout the area.

Upon exiting the trailer the designated person should put on clean Tyvek coveralls, gloves and boots. They should either change their disposable boots or remove as much manure and bedding from their rubber boots as possible and dip them in a foot bath of bleach solution: one cup of 6% bleach (common household cleaner) to 32 cups of water at the entrance/exit point of the trailer. While in the footbath the person should remove their gloves and coveralls and discard into a garbage bag. Event coordinators can purchase garbage bags with disinfection in the bags and drawstrings if they so desire to dispose of the used coveralls, boots and gloves. The designated person should also wipe hands and tagging equipment with Clorox disinfecting wipes or dip tagging tools into a bleach solution (1:32 ratio) as a disinfectant. Disposable syringes should be used to vaccinate each trailer of pigs and needles should be changed between trailers.

Because organic matter is hard to completely disinfect, you will need to change your foot baths often (every 4 or 5 trailers) and discard used bleach in an area away from any livestock traffic. Having Clorox wipes and disposable boots available for anyone that is helping open/close trailers doors is also important. The less contact that is made with areas that may be contaminated with virus the better. Michigan State University Extension suggests eliminating pre-fair weigh-ins for feeder size pigs for the 2014 exhibition year, as complete disinfection of a shared scale would be nearly impossible and increased pig traffic in common areas highly increases the likelihood of disease spread.

At any livestock event it is important that exhibitors use proper observation skills and only transport healthy animals, especially when a central collection point is being used. If an exhibitor does detect clinical symptoms in their pigs such as elevated temperatures, diarrhea and increase respiratory rates allow them to make alternative arrangements for tagging or vaccinating their animals. Extreme care should be taken to not bring sick pigs to locations where other animals or exhibitors will be.

When reviewing your fair or exhibitions protocols for pre-fair weighing, tagging or validation events it is important to minimize the risk the disease spread. Evaluate each step of the process and work to minimize the comingling of pigs and shared equipment or tools. Implementing good biosecurity practices will help maintain the health of the animals involved in your event and allow for youth to have successful starts to their swine projects for the 2014 show season.