



Healthy pigs are happy pigs

South Africa is hosting the 20th International Pig Veterinary Society (IPVS) Congress from 22 to 26 June. The first IPVS congress on the African continent will be of enormous benefit to generate solutions to the emerging pig veterinary challenges, especially those related to exotic and changing viral diseases, decreased use of antimicrobials and nutritional advances. It will take place at the International Convention Centre in Durban, a state-of-the-art facility in the heart of the city.

Dr Peter Evans, who heads the local organising committee, says: "The congress is also important to further pig veterinary science in South Africa, to encourage younger veterinarians to join the pig industry, to act as a vehicle to generate funds for research and to improve the pig industry in southern Africa."

Knowledge about the different diseases that pigs can get, is the very first step towards keeping healthy pigs. It will help you to either prevent illnesses or treat them in time to avoid losing pigs to diseases. Here are some of the common diseases that pigs can suffer from:

Malnutrition (poor condition)

Malnutrition is one of the most significant problems in small pig herds. The pigs will appear thin and show poor growth. There may be a number of reasons for malnutrition:

- Not enough food or poor quality food
- Parasites eating too much food or causing pigs to scratch instead of eat.

Skin conditions

Mange is caused by small parasites called mites, that live in the skin. The pig becomes itchy, scratches and rubs against the walls of the sty

and other objects. The coat looks dull, and there are bare patches, heavy crusts, and lines on the body that look like ribs. Treatment is with spray-on or pour-on preparations or injections that also treat worms.

Pig lice are large and easy to see and can cause loss of blood. Treat them with special sprays.

Fly damage: Flies can enter wounds and delay healing. Control flies with traps, fly papers and sprays (do not spray the pigs' food!). Good hygiene is important to prevent flies.

With **greasy pig disease**, the pig develops yellowish crusts on the snout, around the mouth and behind the ears. These can spread all over the body. The disease is treated with an antibiotic injection.

Pigs with **diamond skin disease**, develop large dark-red patches on the skin. This disease can cause death and is treated with antibiotic injections. You can vaccinate to prevent diamond skin disease.

Worms

Roundworms live in the gut of the pig and can cause malnutrition. They can also move through the body and may cause lung problems. They cause "milk spots" on the liver. Treat roundworms with specific worm remedies and control it with medicine in the food.

Tapeworms or **pork measles** are caused by tapeworms which live in the muscles of pigs. They do not usually affect the pig, but can cause pain that makes it difficult for the pig to move around. When people eat under-cooked meaty pork, the worms will develop inside the persons and make them very sick. Control measles by preventing pigs from eating human faeces. Pigs cannot be treated for this disease.

Lameness

Pigs are heavy compared to the size of their feet and can easily hurt their

feet if there are cracks in the floor or sharp surfaces. Pigs can also develop arthritis (sore joints) fairly easily. Pigs are lame when they do not get up when fed. Examine pigs for sores and swellings. If none are visible, get help from a veterinarian.

Abscesses

Injuries from fighting or injections can result in abscesses. Abscesses are difficult to treat and may need surgery by a veterinarian.

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Fever

Many serious diseases start with fever. Pigs stop eating, lie around, may huddle together and may become red or purple on the belly, legs and ears. They stay close to water and prefer to be in the shade.

African swine fever is the most serious disease of pigs in Africa. Most pigs die after developing this fever. The disease should be reported to a veterinarian. There is no treatment or vaccine, affected pigs must be killed. Other fevers can be treated with antibiotics.

Heatstroke

Pigs that have no shade can suffer heatstroke in hot weather. They lie down, breath heavily (pant), foam at the mouth, become red (flushed) and die quickly. This can be prevented by spraying them with water and by providing shade.

Salt poisoning

Some feeds, especially swill, may contain a great deal of salt. If pigs can drink as much water as they like, this is not a serious problem. If

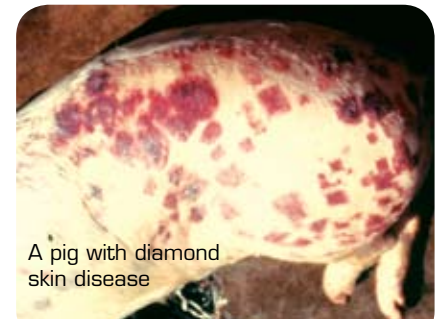
not enough water is available, they can die from salt poisoning. Pigs appear to be blind, fall over and may vomit and have seizures. They die quickly. A good water supply prevents this disease.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is most likely to occur due to over-crowding. It is usually seen in piglets after a change in food. It can also be the result of a disease. The pigs will stop eating and look sick. Get help from a veterinarian or animal health technician.

Pneumonia

Pigs with pneumonia will have difficulty breathing, may stop eating and there may be discharges from the eyes and nose. You should get help from a veterinarian or animal health technician because not all antibiotics are good for treating pneumonia.



A pig with diamond skin disease

Preventative measures

- Hygiene is important in preventing pig diseases
- Pens must be well-drained and cleaned every day
- Clean, fresh drinking water must always be available
- Clean feeding troughs and containers before refilling
- Control flies by removing dung and covering it to make compost
- Store feed in a clean, dry rat-free place. NF