



OAHN (Ontario Animal Health Network) Expert Networks

SWINE PRODUCER NOTICE FEBRUARY 2015

This information is a professional communication for swine producers. It is the intent of this program to improve the health of the Ontario herd. If you have an urgent issue or any questions, please contact your veterinarian.

POST-WEANING COLIBACILLOSIS

Dr. Janet Alsop, OMAFRA

Post weaning colibacillosis is a bacterial disease caused by certain types of *E. coli*. **It primarily affects pigs in the period shortly after weaning and can result in increased death losses in this period.** The disease may occur sporadically within an individual nursery. Both all-in all-out pig flow and continuous flow barns may be affected.

Newly weaned pigs are subject to numerous stressors. At weaning the feed is changed from milk to a solid diet, piglets are separated from the sow and mixed with unfamiliar pigs. Weaned pigs also lose passive intestinal immunity provided by antibodies in the sow's milk. After weaning there are alterations in the structure and function of the piglet's small intestine and changes in the intestinal flora.

Pigs with post weaning colibacillosis may be found dead with no previous clinical signs and may be mistaken for deaths related to *S. suis* or Glasser's disease. These pigs often have distended bellies and sunken eyes and the skin on the extremities (ear, nose, toes) and belly may have a bluish tinge (cyanosis). In piglets that develop clinical signs, the diarrhea may be mild or profuse and the consistency may be pasty or watery. The colour of the diarrhea may vary from white, brown or green to clear. Pigs may appear emaciated and develop sunken eyes. The anus or perineal area may be red due to the irritation caused by alkaline feces. Affected piglets become depressed.

Fluid loss may be so severe that 30 to 40% of the pig's body weight may be lost into the intestine within hours. Dehydration, electrolyte imbalance, metabolic acidosis and death will follow. Initial diagnosis of this disease in a nursery requires that live, scouring piglets or tissue samples be submitted to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory in order to rule out other causes of diarrhea such as viruses or parasites.

If this disease is diagnosed in your animals, your herd veterinarian can help you to develop an appropriate prevention and control program.

WHAT IS OAHN?

The Ontario Animal Health Network is a new program, focusing on early disease detection in animals so as to identify trends in animal health issues that require action. To do this, the program has created expert veterinary networks for each species or commodity. The **Swine Expert Network** is comprised of six veterinarians representing the Ontario Veterinary College, OMAFRA, the Animal Health Laboratory at the University of Guelph and three private practitioners.

Veterinarians who provide service to swine producers are surveyed quarterly about the diseases and issues seen in practice. Results from this survey, along with a summary of swine laboratory results, are discussed to **detect important trends and emerging animal health issues**. This information is distributed as a summary report with supportive educational materials to swine veterinarians. A Producer Report, highlighting one disease/issue noted in the survey will also be distributed to swine producers.

