

Pig Owner's News for the

Hunter



External Parasites: Lice

October 2020

Lice in pigs can cause irritation and rubbing and lice are often blamed for damage caused by mange as both present with the same clinical signs. Lice are relatively uncommon in pig herds today if they are treated routinely to effectively control sarcoptic mange. However lice infestations can cause pigs to spend more time rubbing and scratching, and in turn less time eating and resting, which can cause reduced growth rate and reduced feed efficiency.

Haematopinus suis is the louse that affects pigs. It has piercing and sucking mouthparts and is greyish-brown in colour with brown to black markings. The females are about 6mm long and the males are slightly smaller and so are easily seen with the naked eye.

The pig louse is host-specific and cannot survive for more than a couple of days away from pigs. The lifecycle is completed from egg to adult on the pig in 30 days. The adult female attaches 2-4 eggs per day to hair shafts and may lay as many as 90 eggs over a 25 day period. These yellow eggs can be seen easily on dark haired pigs. The young lice (nymphs) emerge from the eggs in 10 to 21 days, maturing to adults by 30 days, depending on the environmental conditions. The nymphs go through three developmental stages and feed on blood in all three stages before reaching the adult stage. The average lifespan for male and female lice is about 25 days.



Haematopinus suis

Lice are found on all parts of the body, but particularly in the folds of skin around the neck, jowl, flanks and on the inside of the legs. This is because these areas are warmer and protected. Lice can often be found inside the ears.



Transmission is primarily by direct contact although naïve pigs being put in a recently vacated infected pen can become infected.

Heavy infestations of lice can result in anaemia in young pigs and may affect growth rate and feed efficiency. The heaviest infestations of pig lice usually occur in winter.

Treatment and control of lice is relatively easily achieved as the lice live on the skin surface and can only survive a few days away from their host (the pig). Treatments are available as sprays, pour-ons and injections. Two doses 10-14 days apart are usually recommended, but always follow the manufacturers instructions on the product that you are using.

All treatments are ineffective against eggs hence the need to treat twice. Special attention needs to be given to treating around the ears, as well as the treatment of the boars, multiple treatment of sows prior to farrowing, segregation of clean and untreated animals if the whole herd is not treated at one time, and treatment of all introduced animals.



 | Department of Primary Industries

African swine fever

African swine fever is continuing its spread throughout Asia

It is deadly for pigs and is a notifiable disease

EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE
1800 675 888

Be alert to the signs

Report it immediately if you see multiple pigs suffering:

- Fever
- 'Blotching' of the skin
- Incoordination
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Pneumonia

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