

Pig Owner's News for the

Hunter



Rodents and Pigs

February 2021

Rodents can spread disease and they have the ability to infect pigs with several different diseases, such as leptospirosis, salmonellosis, swine dysentery, toxoplasmosis, erysipelas and encephalomyocarditis (EMC). They can also affect the health and growth of the pigs and can affect people as well, making them quite unwell. During the current climatic conditions that we are experiencing in the Hunter, many areas are experiencing a rodent plague. Both mice and rats are being seen in huge numbers that most people do not recall seeing over the past 20 or 30 years.

Controlling rodents, whether they are in an intensive indoor piggery, free range or you just have a couple of pigs in the backyard, presents many challenges and you cannot rely on baits alone.

Effective rodent control management can only be obtained if the food and water supply the rodents are accessing is reduced, the rodents' shelter is reduced, and you maintain ongoing monitoring and surveillance.

You must implement an integrated approach for successful rodent control.

This includes:

1. Prevention and hygiene
2. Monitoring
3. Non-chemical solutions
4. Chemical solutions (baiting)
5. On-going monitoring

Any rodenticide products you use must be prescribed for agricultural production systems. All instructions must be strictly followed, including those for protective clothing. Remember that all rodenticides are sufficiently toxic to cause death to pigs (and other household pets, such as cats and dogs) and that pigs may feed on rodent carcasses. Therefore, all rodent carcasses must be disposed of properly to ensure that pigs don't consume them.



It is essential to reduce the places where rodents can shelter. Prevent clutter in and around buildings. Ensure all feed is stored in rodent-proof containers. If rodents can't hide or nest, your place will not seem as attractive to them. Cover all feeders with tight-fitting lids. Avoid

feed contamination with rodent urine or faeces. Clean up any food spills promptly and thoroughly.

Bait stations should be kept outside sheds to control rodents and prevent surviving rodents from breeding. **Baits (including locked bait stations) should NOT be placed in pig sheds, or areas that pigs have access.** Use tamper-proof commercial bait stations, where the bait is secured within the station and cannot be removed. The bait station itself must be secured using rodent-proof material, such as chain. Ongoing surveillance is essential to maintain rodent control.

Australian Pork Limited (APL) has produced an Industry Rodenticide Stewardship Plan, which covers in detail how to implement a control program. It includes effective non-chemical strategies and the chemical approaches available to Australian pig producers. The Plan can be found on the APL website (in the Biosecurity Section).

In Australia, we often see a rise in the number of cases of **Encephalomyocarditis Virus (EMCV)** infection in pigs during mouse plagues. Rodents are the principal reservoirs of this virus and pigs are the domestic animal most susceptible to clinical disease by EMCV infection.

Infected rodents excrete the virus in their faeces and urine. Contaminated feed, water and bedding are the most common sources of infection. Feed contaminated by infected carcasses may contain high doses of the virus.

EMCV infection in young pigs is most commonly seen as sudden death due to heart failure. Infection in grower pigs is usually subclinical. In breeding females, there might be reproductive problems, such as abortions, stillbirths and mummified foetuses.

There is no treatment, but mortality might be minimized by avoiding stress and excitement of the pigs at risk.

Be vigilant! EMCV has already been confirmed in two separate piggeries in NSW.



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