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Internal Parasites of Pigs

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Pigs can be infected with a number of different roundworms. These can result in poor weight gain in adults. In young pigs, infection with roundworms can cause diarrhea, weight loss, lung problems and death. Worms from pigs can cause disease in human.

Roundworm Infection

Pigs can be infected with a number of different roundworms. People who keep pigs can notice large roundworms, 25 - 40 cm long in the animals' dung. In pigs 2 to 5 months old, the worms cause diarrhea, weight loss and lung problems. The young worm lives in the liver and lungs before passing into the intestine. The damage to the lungs can allow germs to attack and cause coughing and lung infections. The young pig can die. The worm in the liver of young and adult pigs causes white spots (milk spot) to develop. Such a liver should not be eaten by humans

Treatment and Control of Roundworms

Infected pigs are easily treated by dosing with a suitable treatment, e.g. piperazine. The pregnant sow should be treated before giving birth or she will pass on infection to her litter. One female worm will produce a million eggs a day which pass out in the dung. These eggs infect new hosts and can stay in the ground or the pigsty for up to 5 years. The pigsty, shelter or pen should be cleaned out and the walls and floor treated with caustic soda which is left for 2 - 3 days before washing it off. If infected pigs have been kept out in a field, the land should be ploughed and used for a crop, or as grazing for other animals, before pigs are put back on it.

Problems Caused by Pig Parasites in Humans

Pigs can be infected with a parasitic worm called *Trichinella*. The adult worm lives in the intestine while young worms are found in the muscles (meat). It does not appear to be a problem to the pig. Any animal which eats the pig meat can be infected with the worm. Pigs can be infected with *Trichinella* from eating rats which have the infection. Pigs will also be infected from contaminated meat so all meat fed to the animals (e.g. in swill) should be thoroughly cooked. Thorough cooking of pork will also kill the worm. If humans eat undercooked pig meat from an animal infected with this parasite they will become infected too. If a pig is left to wander around, it may eat plants contaminated with human faeces. In this way, the pig meat can become infected with a tapeworm from humans. If the meat of that pig is not properly cooked, people who eat it can become infected with the pork tapeworm. Do not allow pigs to wander around free.

Skin infection of pigs

Mange: Mange is caused by infection with mites and results in thickening and crusting of the skin. The activity of the mites burrowing into the skin makes the pig scratch and the wounds caused can become infected with germs. Mange occurs around the head, ears, legs and tail but will spread over the body if not treated. Mange is controlled by spraying, dipping or

painting the infected areas with a suitable preparation. The pen and shelter should also be thoroughly cleaned out and washed down. Treatment should be repeated after 2 weeks. After working with mange pigs, wash your hands thoroughly and wash clothing too. If you have a mange problem in your community which you cannot stop you will need to ask for veterinary advice. To identify the mite causing the problem the veterinarian will need skin scrapings from infected animals. Identifying the mite will allow him to decide what treatment you should use.

Lice and tick infections: Pigs can suffer from infection with dark colored lice which can be seen on the animal's body. The lice feed on the skin and irritate the pig which will scratch and can cause wounds which become infected. Treatment involves spraying with coumaphos and cleaning the areas where the animals are kept. Pigs can be attacked by some ticks which take blood. The ticks may carry other infections to the animals. Treatment can be carried out by spraying with a suitable compound or by removing the ticks by hand or by touching them with kerosene or a lighted cigarette. Affected pens should be thoroughly cleaned.

Erysipelas (Diamond skin disease): Erysipelas or diamond skin disease of pigs can kill the animals. This is an infection of the pig's body which produces recognizable discoloration on the pig's body. These are reddish diamond-shaped areas on the skin or the animal may have a purplish color to the head and ears. Pigs with erysipelas have a high temperature and do not feed; they squeal if touched. The animal can die from an acute infection or in chronic cases the animal survives but suffers from swollen joints and lameness. Erysipelas is treated by using the antibiotic penicillin. Animals can be vaccinated against the disease.