

COLITIS

What is the disease?

Colitis is inflammation of the large bowel and is a common cause of diarrhoea in growing pigs. It can be caused by a range of factors, from infections (i.e. bacterial, parasitic and viral agents) to feed associated causes and immunosuppressive diseases.

Colitis is a cause of financial loss due to delays in pigs reaching finishing weight and mortality. Colitis causes erosion and inflammation of the large bowel, which increases the risk of bacteria colonising this tissue, putting affected animals at an increased risk of developing further infections. This is expressed as scours, with faeces being like 'cow pat' in appearance. As the disease progresses diarrhoea become waterier in appearance, with dehydration and loss of body condition occurring.

How common is it on-farm?

Colitis is most common in young pigs between 6 – 14 weeks of age. It is less common in older pigs or pigs that are still sucking. Colitis has been linked to diet, with the disease being more common in pigs on pelleted diets and on diets that have a high content of soluble fibre in grains. Facilities that have a continuous flow of pigs can lead to animals being predisposed to the disease through exposure to pathogens.

How is it spread?

Diet has been identified as a factor in the development of this condition, as have the presence of other bacterial, viral and parasitic infections. It is important to determine what is causing the colitis to implement effective control. Reservoir hosts such as in wild birds or rodents also have the potential to spread the bacterial agents.

Carcass impact

Intestines will be condemned. Colitis can cause watery diarrhoea, which can lead to skin becoming contaminated with faecal matter.

Treatment

Consult with your veterinarian to determine the cause of the colitis. Treatment will depend on the cause of the colitis. For dietary-induced colitis, changes can be made to the feed, feed amount and form (pellets to meal). If the causal agent of the colitis is infectious, your veterinarian will determine the pathogen and recommend a suitable treatment.

Prevention

Good hygiene practices with regular washing of pens between groups and disinfection is essential to managing bacterial causes of this condition. Additionally, managing buildings on an all-in-all-out basis can help to control this disease. Determining the causes of colitis is essential to preventing further cases.



Chronic inflammation of the serosal surface of the colon wall, indicating long term colonic disease • Source: R Fogarty