

Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Research Reports

Volume 0
Issue 10 *Swine Day (1968-2014)*

Article 159

1975

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Recommended Citation

Koch, B A.; Allee, G L.; Schoneweis, D A.; and Hines, Robert H. (1975) "Extra iron for baby pigs," *Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Research Reports*: Vol. 0: Iss. 10. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5977.5999>

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Extra iron for baby pigs

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Extra Iron for Baby Pigs

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Summary

Ten mg. of iron per day fed orally 24 days in addition to 150 mg. injected when pigs were 3 days old did not significantly increase Hb of baby pigs. Neither did it increase average daily gain or weight-per-day-of-age at 32 days. We saw no symptoms of iron toxicity in treated pigs.

Introduction

Reports in the popular press suggest that baby pigs respond to more iron than is currently recommended. The increased iron is said to increase blood hemoglobin greatly, also to give healthier, faster growing pigs.

Procedure

The usual iron (150 mgs. injected intramuscularly on day 3) was given to all pigs in 8 cross-bred litters (average birth weight 3.4 pounds). Then half the males and half the females in each litter were marked with paint. Starting when all pigs averaged approximately 7 days of age each marked pig received 10 mg. of oral supplemental iron (as ferrous sulfate) per day for 24 days. The iron was included in multiple vitamin and mineral tablets prepared for human consumption. Both control and treated pigs were handled exactly the same each day when pills were given to treated pigs except that control pigs received no pill. Blood samples were drawn from each pig on the first and last day of treatment. Pigs also were weighed on the last day.

Results and Discussion

Results are summarized in table 21. Initial average hemoglobin values of the two groups differed slightly (see table). Changes in hemoglobin during the treatment period did not differ significantly but hemoglobin of treated animals increased more than in control animals. Final values remained within normally accepted levels. Values for only 3 pigs (all treated) went above 13.0 gms. %.

Average daily weight gains did not differ significantly between groups. Weight per day of age at the end of the study was the same for both groups. Average age at the end of the study was 32 days and average weight, 20.1 lbs.

No visible sign of iron toxicity was evident in any treated pig. Pigs in both groups appeared equally alert, active, smooth-coated, and healthy.

Table 21. Results from feeding baby pigs extra iron 28 days.

	Control	Treated
No. of pigs	26	27
Avg. initial Hb., gms, %	9.13	9.96
Avg. Hb. change, gms, %	+1.49	+1.84
Avg. final Hb. gms, %	10.62	11.80
Avg. daily gain, lbs.	0.52	0.52
Avg. wt. per day of age, lbs.	0.63	0.63