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The Evaluation of Virginiamycin in Feed as a Treatment For Swine Dysentery in Heavy (More Than 120 lbs.) Hogs

David A. Schoneweis¹

Summary

Virginiamycin at 100 grams per ton of feed was effective as a treatment against swine dysentery. The only pig receiving Virginiamycin that died during treatment had concurrent gangrenous pneumonia --probably the major cause of death. The pigs receiving the feed with Virginiamycin were more alert and ate more than the controls--which resulted in more weight gain and improved feed conversion. The Virginiamycin did not clear up all signs of dysentery as several pigs continued to have diarrhea. Pigs that had been on Virginiamycin began to break with dysentery six days after the antibiotic was withdrawn and a pig weighing 234 pounds died of acute swine dysentery on the eleventh day of the observation period.

This experiment using heavy finishing pigs indicated that Virginiamycin was effective as a treatment, but that it should be fed continually up to slaughter after a recent acute outbreak of swine dysentery.

Introduction

For many years, the swine disease known as vibronic dysentery, or swine dysentery, was considered a disease only of feeder pigs--not a

serious problem in pigs approaching market weight. That is no longer true. Many producers have had severe monetary losses resulting from reduced performance and death loss in heavy hogs with swine dysentery. This study was to evaluate the efficacy of 100 grams per ton of Virginiamycin as a treatment for hogs weighing more than 120 pounds with clinical signs of swine dysentery.

Procedures

Sixty crossbred barrows averaging 173 pounds at the farm were purchased from a large commercial farrow-to-finish operation and transported to the Animal Resource Facility at Kansas State University. Three pigs each were placed in 5' by 8' pens with water supplied by a nipple waterer. The pigs were not fed for approximately 70 hours to increase chance of a dysentery break after exposure to colonic contents of a pig that died with swine dysentery. Feed was normally available in self-feeders.

After 70 hours fasting, each pig was given approximately 1/2 pound of a balanced commercial 14% sorghum-soybean feed that contained no feed additives. The feed had been mixed with a suspension of colonic content and small pieces of colon. The next day the pigs were fed approximately 2 pounds of feed and then allowed to eat from the self-feeder.

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