International Pig Topics

Pighealth BYTES

Your own reference source on pig health

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Biosecurity VIII

Pig herd inputs

There are only three things that every pig takes in every day and those are food, water and air. These three inputs provide a very good vehicle for bringing a disease-causing organism into our pig herd. In this Pighealth BYTES we look at the biosecurity of our water supply.

Water: know its origin

Local city water is best because it has been prepared for humans to drink and does not need further treatment. This preparation usually includes chlorination.

The next water supply to think about is artesian water, which is water from underground. This is generally of reasonable microbiological quality because bacteria have been filtered out as the water seeps through the ground to the artesian reservoir. One thing to watch out for if you have a borehole into a shallow artesian water supply is that you or your neighbouring farm are not contaminating the water by, for example, seepage from a dead animal pit.

Probably the most dangerous water is that which comes from standing water, such as ponds. Standing water can accumulate faeces from wild animals (wild boar) and birds (water fowl) and be contaminated from run offs from farms and slaughter plants. So, it is quite easy to see how they could easily become contaminated with porcine pathogens.

River water is less of a risk because there is an on-going replacement of the water with fresh water from upstream. One thing you need to be aware of, however, if you are sourcing river water for your pigs, is what is being discharged into the river upstream of your source.

There is a good poultry example from the USA that highlights this. A table egg layer flock went down with Salmonella enteritidis at a time when there was very little S. enteritidis in the States. This was not the usual US phage type and it was discovered that there was somebody in a nearby village that had picked up an infection with the same phage type while on an overseas holiday. This person had been nowhere near the table egg farm. However, the type of S. enteritidis found on the farm was also found in the sewage outlet that discharged sewage from the village into the river a short distance upstream from the farm.

Prevention is better than cure

The best way to manage this biosecurity risk is to get the correct water source at the outset.

When treating incoming water there is always the risk that some does not get treated or is under dosed, with the result that the porcine pathogen survives in the water and can get to your pigs.