Make sure cleanliness is a high priority on the farm

Cleanliness has always been a high priority on the farm, as poor conditions can lead to sick animals and staff, which directly impacts a business' profit and reputation. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the agricultural supply chain faced numerous disruptions and challenges. From close contact with coworkers to working with live and dead animals, the past year resulted in new cleaning protocols and higher expectations when it comes to cleanliness.

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The growing popularity of pig farming science and technology has helped in designing the modern pig farm, but there are still areas that require added cleanliness and must be addressed on a regular basis. Fortunately, there are solutions already on the market that can help keep these areas of a pig farm in top shape, prioritising the health of both the animals and staff.

Pigs and pathogens

Hygiene and epidemic prevention on farms starts before any animals arrive. From building pig farms in high topography with broad terrain to ensuring the facilities have good ventilation, to installing large sewage treatments on site, a lot of thought goes into how to keep pig farms sanitary.

Another major consideration for farmers is water supply. Water is singlehandedly the greatest resource utilised on the farm. Grower and finishing pigs drink on average 2-5 gallons of water per day. If a pig loses even one-tenth of its water weight, it can result in death. On a farm with 1,000 pigs, over six tons of drinking water can be used in just one day. This makes it especially important for water lines to be clean for drinking as well as administering necessary nutrients, vitamins and vaccinations.

Many farms rely on local water sources or well water for drinking water. Over time, biofilms can build up in water lines. These complex clusters of micro-organisms contaminate water and become a vector for diseases.

But pigs require water for more than drinking – they need water to help adjust body temperature when it is too warm, to help remove waste from crates and for the production of milk. Farmers must clean pens regularly to remove excrement and other organic waste. The tyres of trucks and soles of shoes should be washed before and after entering the premises to avoid introducing new pathogens to the animals.

At every stage of the growing process, water is key. Ensuring your animals remain healthy and disease-free means prioritising access to clean water.

Modern solutions make for successful farms

To keep water lines clean and free of biofilms, consider the following:

- **Install a durable water-driven pump.** Water-driven pumps (WDP) are designed to medicate water and dilute chemicals safely and effectively. They do not require batteries or electricity, but instead use water pressure from the source of the water. Having a reliable WDP can make a major difference in whether or not harmful germs transfer from the water source to drinking water. Some WDPs are not built to withstand modern-day chemicals, such as organic acids and highly aggressive chemicals as farmers move away from antibiotic use. Make sure to install a WDP that is compatible with cleaning chemicals used on your farm.
- **Always clean water lines after medication treatments.** Without antibiotics, it is more important than ever to clean water lines after treatments to ensure treatments do not linger in the water line or build up biofilms. To effectively clean water lines, farms should utilise solutions that can be attached to the water line and chemical container that is being used. The line then transfers the water and chemical mixture into the area that requires cleaning. Use a cleaning and disinfection pump that can be used with any size container and is simple to move, install and store.
- **Schedule periodic cleans.** In addition to cleaning after treatments and medications, water lines should be cleaned on a regular basis. Consider scheduling these cleans at the same time as routine pen and area cleanings.
- **Utilise the right chemicals.** It is essential to choose the right chemicals to effectively eliminate existing biofilms and reduce the risk of future build-up. Ozone, chlorine, chlorine dioxide, hydrogen peroxide, sodium hydroxide and more can all be used to clean water lines. The concentration of these chemicals can affect their performance, so make sure to utilise chemical dispensers that accurately measure and dispense the chemical accordingly.

To ensure the premises and animal environments remain clean, consider investing in foaming and spraying solutions. Building interiors and loading bays can be cleaned quickly with the help of a foamer.

Foaming solutions can reach small corners, tiny crevices and even tall, out-of-reach areas that are too difficult to clean by hand. This approach also ensures the cleaning or disinfecting chemical is properly applied to surfaces. These devices can be used to help clean large barns, feeding areas, tyres on vehicles, machinery and much more.

Clean farm, clean food

As the market shifts and changes following the pandemic, cleanliness is one trend that is here to stay. To continue providing the best quality food, while also maintaining a positive reputation and a healthy bottom line, it is essential that farmers take every precaution they can when it comes to keeping animals and staff healthy. With the right solutions in place, water lines and other areas of the farm can remain free of harmful pathogens. ■