

## Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus (PEDv)

Bacon, sausage, pork chops and ham are all becoming increasingly expensive for consumers. These record high retail pork prices have the potential to increase even more. That's good news for some pork producers and devastating for others. It all depends on whether or not the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv) is in your farrowing barn.

PEDv was first reported in 1971 in Britain but never identified in the U.S. until April 2013. Once in the U.S. it has spread quickly to more than 30 states. PEDv is both financially and emotionally devastating to pork producers all across the country. The economic impacts are obvious, but it is profoundly discouraging to hog producers who daily pack loads of dead baby pigs out of farrowing barns. It is even more dismal to be completely helpless in solving the problem. Fortunately Utah producers have thus far dodged the virus, but neighboring states of Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and Arizona are dealing with the problem, and it is a big one.

PEDv is caused by a nasty virus that is related to the transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE) virus. This virus causes intense diarrhea and vomiting, especially in baby piglets, making it impossible for them to absorb any of their mother's milk. Virtually 100% of all pre-weaned pigs die, feeder and grower pigs don't grow well and the reduced body condition of mature sows negatively impact reproductive performance. Dreadful losses mount in all steps of the production process. Essential biosecurity steps are also increasing operating costs on all hog farms, even those not yet infected.

Dr. Howard Hill, a Cambridge, Iowa pork producer and President of the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) reported on the state of the U.S. pork industry last week. Speaking before the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Livestock, Rural Development and Credit, President Hill, also a veterinarian, gave an account of the devastating effects PEDv is having on the U.S. swine herd. Dr. Hill reported the virus, which has no effective vaccine, has already killed more than 7 million pigs. There is gloomy evidence that PEDv will kill another 10 million pigs within the next year. NPPC called on USDA to conduct a thorough investigation on the pathway PEDv used to gain entrance into the U.S. swine herd and also to commit more resources to finding ways to control the virus. Already the National Pork Board has spent \$2 million plus in Pork Checkoff-funded research. Check-off dollars come directly from pork producers who assess themselves a percentage of sales at the market place. Those monies are being leveraged by other supporting industries such as Cargill's Animal Nutrition who donated \$150,000 last week for additional PEDv research.

This disease of the intestine quickly spreads via fecal-oral exposure. Clothing, footwear, trucks and equipment become easy carriers. Strict biosecurity has been pushed to the forefront in protecting hog farms from PEDv. Bio-security is a must to keep the disease from spreading, but unfortunately it is still moving to new states. The swine industry has never seen anything like this.

In an effort to help protect our \$20 million Utah pork industry, the Utah State Veterinarian's Office recently issued an emergency order regarding the importation and showing of swine throughout the state. The order states that "effective May 5, 2014, all county and state fairs as well as other showings such as junior livestock shows and exhibitions where pigs and hogs are displayed or sold shall be

considered a terminal show. This means that students and others who intend to enter swine for judging will not be allowed to bring the animals back to the farm, and the swine must go directly to slaughter.....The emergency order also requires all hogs and pigs entering Utah to be inspected by a veterinarian and have a Certificate of Veterinarian Inspection..." stating the pigs have not been exposed to PEDv. As of April 18 USDA is requiring mandatory reporting protocols of PEDv, including tracking of movements of pigs, vehicles, and other equipment leaving affected premises. As serious as a potential Utah outbreak could be, some believe we should completely restrict the movement of any pigs into the state. That may be a good idea, but it would be very difficult to enforce.

Fortunately the PED virus is not a food safety issue since it cannot be passed on to humans. PEDv is species specific and not a health threat to humans or other animal species. The impact to humans comes in the pocketbook. In infected states there are lots of hog finishing barns that are totally empty or only partially filled, which leads to a significant reduction on the number of pigs harvested. Economist Steve Meyer, president of Paragon Economics, predicts the shortage of market hogs will push U.S. hog prices up by 15 to 25 percent. Consumers will not be happy about that.