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Periweaning failure to thrive syndrome

Mark Wagner, PhD

A frustrating yet sometimes common observation in the field is when what perceived as normal pigs at weaning suddenly stop eating and loose body condition, hence becoming failure to thrive type pigs. Unfortunately causes of this syndrome often can be multifactorial and involve areas of management, environment, nutrition, and disease. Because of this, diagnosing and eliminating the cause can be challenging, especially when prevalence among farms varies, percent of pigs affected within a wean group varies, and even expression of the syndrome from wean to wean may vary. In this specific talk I will discuss a farm case in which HEV virus seems to be the primary underlying cause of this type of syndrome.

The farm for this case history is a 1500 sow isowean farm that provides weaned pigs on a weekly basis to four separate shareholders. The farm is serologically positive to PRRS virus. Replacement gilts are purchased PRRS naive at 35 and 70 days of age and acclimated to farm PRRS virus off site and entered into sow farm approximately 100 days post acclimation. No active PRRS has

been diagnosed in the sow, nursing piglet, or nursery phase for the last twelve months. However, each of the shareholders will have anywhere from 1% to 6% of the pigs weaned that exhibit a failure to thrive type syndrome. Prevalence of clinical signs varies from week to week, but not related to a specific shareholder or site. Diagnostics completed during the last twelve months have consistently demonstrated HEV virus in both nursing and recently weaned pigs presenting as either normal or unthrifty. Diagnosis is confirmed by PCR positive samples that may include the tonsil, lung, nasal cavity, and intestine in addition to some host path less ions in the stomachs of clinical pigs. During my presentation, I will go into detail on diagnostic findings, sow herd/replacement gilt exposure and immunity, and interventions that the farm has recently put in place.

