

TITLE

HOW TO COACH THE SWINE FARMERS TO OMIT ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENT IN PIGLETS VACCINATED AGAINST POST-WEANING DIARRHEA: THE EXAMPLE OF THE FECAL SCORECARD

Frédéric Vangroenweghe¹

¹ *BU Food Animals, Elanco Animal Health Benelux*

CONTENT

Background & Objectives – Post-weaning *Escherichia coli* diarrhea (PWD) caused by enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC) remains a major cause of economic losses for the pig industry and provokes mild to severe watery diarrhea. Coliprotec® F4/F18, an oral live bivalent vaccine is now available, which reduces the impact of PWD caused by F4-ETEC and F18-ETEC. However, following vaccination, a transient mild diarrhea might be observed, but it does not evolve into clinical diarrhea. The objective was to evaluate behavior of swine farmers after coaching using a fecal scorecard as a decision tool on early treatment of piglets vaccinated pre-weaning with Coliprotec® F4/F18.

Material & Methods – A fecal scorecard was developed, with fecal scores of 0 (normal), 1 (pasty), 2 (mild diarrhea), 3 (moderate diarrhea) and 4 (severe diarrhea). Following application of Coliprotec® F4/F18 vaccine, no fecal scores belonging to score 3 and 4 have been observed. Therefore, it is of critical importance that swine farmers who observe a fecal score of 2 do not immediately take action and treat the piglets, since experience has learnt that this score is transient, evolving within 24-36 hours towards a fecal score of 1 or 0. Using the fecal scorecard treatment behavior of swine farmers (n = 20 farms) was monitored during the critical 10 days post-weaning.

Results – Analysis of the behavior showed that managing expectations and clear communication on vaccine experiences and antibiotic treatment resulted in 85% of the farmers postponing and eventually omit premature treatment of vaccinated piglets.

Discussion & Conclusion – Managing expectations and clear communication with swine farmers on the indications of Coliprotec® F4/F18 vaccine are essential to obtain a significant reduction in antibiotic use. Through coaching discussions with his advisors and practical use of the fecal scorecard swine farmers get successful guidance to prevent early, unnecessary antibiotic treatment.