



HERD HEALTH MANAGEMENT & ECONOMY

HHM-061

STRATEGIC MEDICATION OF SUCKLING PIGLETS

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Introduction

Strategic medication of piglets in the first week of life is common to prevent umbilical hernias, arthritis, and other infections. In Denmark, the drugs used can roughly be grouped into penicillins/ amoxycillins and long-term acting macrolides. Due to the public debate about antibiotic resistance, some farmers are reluctant to use macrolides, but in some cases the clinical problems cannot be handled by administration of penicillins or amoxycillin.

Materials & methods

This study was set up in a Danish 800 sow herd with high prevalence of umbilical hernias despite strategic medication of all piglets on day 1 after birth. Piglets were sold for finishing at 30 kg live weight, and umbilical hernias posed a problem for the sales.

Farmer and vet agreed to test a long-term acting macrolide against the usual treatment. Every second litter was treated with a long-term acting macrolide at day 1 (Zactran, Boehringer-Ingelheim), and every second litter were treated with Penicillin/DHS (Norostrep Vet., ScanVet Animal Health). After day 1, piglets were only treated with antibiotics, if clinical symptoms were observed. Parameters recorded were: Pre-wean mortality, pre-wean antibiotic treatments against joint diseases or diarrhoea, and prevalence of umbilical hernias before sale.

Results

Totally, 1400 piglets were treated with Zactran, and 1451 with Norostrep. The pre-wean mortality in the Zactran group and the Norostrep group was 8.7% and 11,6% ($p=0.021$), the prevalence of piglets treated against joint diseases 3.07% and 2.76% ($p=0.703$), and the prevalence of pigs treated against diarrhoea 20.3% and 28.2% ($p<0.001$). Before sale, the prevalence of umbilical hernias was 2.0% and 3.2% ($p=0.104$).

Discussion & conclusion

The use of the long-term acting macrolide for strategic medication of piglets at day 1 significantly reduced pre-wean mortality and diarrhoea among pre-wean piglets, compared to the usual treatment. Furthermore, the prevalence of umbilical hernias was numerically reduced to 2/3.