# SWINE DYSENTERY – A FINANCIAL THREAT TO THE GB PIG INDUSTRY

**Two swine dysentery outbreaks have been diagnosed in the Yorkshire region since April 2016 – this information highlights information for pig producers.**

## Swine dysentery – the disease and its cause

- Swine dysentery is a bacterial disease of pigs caused by *Brachyspira hyodysenteriae*
- It results in **diarrhoea** and **weight loss** which severely limits productivity
- Pigs which survive infection require treatment, take longer to reach slaughter weight and the farm's productivity and competitiveness is compromised
- Infected pigs, their dung and anything contaminated with dung (vehicles, boots, slurry, equipment) can **easily spread** infection between farms
- The disease is a particular threat to farms selling pigs for breeding; if these become infected their international and UK trade is devastated
- Resistance to the limited range of treatments for swine dysentery is increasing. There have been cases where the swine dysentery organism is **resistant** to all available treatments and complete depopulation has been the only way to control disease on these farms and prevent spread
- An infected pig farm threatens others within an area due to potential **local spread** and also threatens farms in other regions due to **spread on vehicles** or by pig movements

In the last 18 months, new cases of swine dysentery in Britain have been infrequent, but two outbreaks have now been diagnosed in the Yorkshire area since April 2016. These incidents are not a measure of the number of herds already infected with swine dysentery but instead reflect the spread of disease to new herds.
If you see unexplained diarrhoea and wasting, especially if the diarrhoea contains blood or mucus, contact your vet immediately who will advise you. Diagnosis is achieved by submitting faeces or pigs for testing. Prompt diagnosis is important so that suitable control measures are quickly implemented which helps limit spread of the infection. Swine dysentery tends to cause most obvious disease in growers, finishers and younger breeding stock, with low to moderate mortality. Further guidance on sampling for diagnosis is available on this link: http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/documents/surveillance/sub-handbook.pdf.

## Swine dysentery control

**IMPROVING FARM BIOSECURITY:** Regular on-farm biosecurity audits with your vet to identify and address weak points are key to preventing an outbreak of swine dysentery and limiting spread if your pigs become infected. Maintaining good biosecurity has the wider benefit of reducing the risk of introduction and spread of other diseases including salmonella and PRRS. The AHDB Pork Biorisk tool is a useful reminder to farm staff of areas to target: http://thinkbiorisk.pork.ahdb.org.uk/ and specific guidance on swine dysentery is available at: http://pork.ahdb.org.uk/health-welfare/health/swine-dysentery/.

**IMPLEMENTING LORRY WASHING STANDARDS:** Abattoirs are an area where there is high potential for cross contamination of vehicles and this can be prevented with effective cleaning and disinfection. It is a requirement of the BQAP assurance scheme that pig lorries must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before leaving the abattoir. If a dirty lorry arrives on your unit, don't be afraid to turn it away!

**DECLARATION OF DISEASE STATUS:** Pig producers are encouraged to sign up to the Significant Diseases Charter (an extension of the Swine Dysentery Charter), whose members share details of outbreaks of swine dysentery on their farms with other members, helping farmers to know when they are most at risk and may need to tighten biosecurity. Sign up by logging into the Pig Hub: http://www.pighub.org.uk.

**These control measures will also be invaluable in the event of an outbreak of notifiable disease such as swine fever or porcine epidemic diarrhoea. The messages are clear – take all precautions to prevent entry of diseases like swine dysentery and, if you see suspicious signs, contact your veterinary surgeon immediately.**

Please feel free to produce copies of this guidance and circulate to others.

PHWC Surveillance