

Pork Checkoff Continues to Seek Solutions to PEDv Challenges

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US - When America's pork producers face a challenge, they respond quickly and with purpose. That's been evident since May when diagnostics confirmed Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) in the United States for the first time.

To begin to find solutions to PEDV, now found in at least 17 states, the National Pork Board's board of directors committed \$800,000 toward research, education and coordination of efforts to better understand the disease. The goal is to contain and eliminate it from the United States.

"Pork producers immediately responded to PEDV," said National Pork Board president Karen Richter, who raises hogs and farms with her family in Montgomery, Minnesota.

"We have already learned so much through increased cooperation among state and federal agencies, professional organizations and associations, as well as from information producers have willingly shared," Ms Richter said. "Our focus on research, education and the sharing of information is exactly where we need to provide Checkoff funds."

According to Dr Paul Sundberg, vice president of science and technology for the Pork Checkoff, PEDV is a new virus to the United States but not to other parts of the world and is not a regulatory/reportable disease.

The production-related disease hits young pigs under three weeks of age particularly hard, with mortality approaching 100 per cent. Infected grow-finish pigs and sows typically get sick and are set back, but they typically recover.

Although its origin into the country is still unknown, the American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV) continues to investigate PEDV's potential route here. On a positive note, PEDV's mystery has provided a real-world opportunity for the industry to hone its skills at working together to help stop a new disease once it's entered the United States.

Work with Your Veterinarian

"PEDV may appear clinically to be the same as the transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE) virus with acute diarrhea," Dr Sundberg said. "Producers should contact their veterinarian immediately if any TGE-like symptoms appear because fast identification and practices to contain the virus after an outbreak will help control PEDV."

Like many swine diseases, PEDV is spread in a fecal-oral manner, so producers, handlers and transporters are urged to follow strict biosecurity measures. Special care should be taken to wash and completely disinfect transport vehicles.

"Through research completed so far, we've found that transporting sows and market hogs can be a major risk factor for PEDV's spread," Dr Sundberg said.

Collaboration Is Key

The Pork Checkoff's team of veterinarians has assembled working groups of producers, veterinarians, researchers, packers and processors to refine specific control approaches in three areas: packing plants, on-farm/transport (to prevent a clean farm from being infected) and on-farm containment (to prevent spread from infected farms).

Checkoff-funded research is focused on diagnostic tools for PEDV, pathogenicity, disinfecting and transmission risk factors. The Checkoff also is educating pork producers and transporters on steps to take to eliminate PEDV.

"The collaboration with our industry partners has been outstanding," Dr Sundberg said. "Each day we learn more about PEDV, which helps us find solutions for pork producers."

