

## Veterinarian: Pig system stability works better than dosing pigs

Expert believes building pig immunity early in life is better approach to combating disease

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Dr. Mark FitzSimmons, a pig farmer and veterinarian of Swine Graphics, presented at the 30th Alltech Symposium that he believes maintaining stability in systems, rather than dosing, is the key to combating stress and disease in pigs.

“You can actually make an endemic disease become epidemic ... if you try to use antibiotics to eliminate a bacterial disease out of your pig population,” FitzSimmons said.

He went on to discuss the current eradication process of mycoplasma: “The disease itself is not that big of a deal. If you take your gilt production system, and because you can, you go in and you use antibiotics at a high level in pigs early in their life (basically in the farrowing house) and you eliminate mycoplasma from that pig population ... that’s going to be a problem.

“You have gilts that come into the farrowing house; they farrow their pigs. Instead of getting exposed to [a small amount of] mycoplasma early in their life and getting colonized normally by the sow ... they get exposed to [a large amount of] mycoplasma, because of the gilts that came in naïve into that herd are shedding at the rate that they should have been shedding at when they were 180 days of age and they weren’t anywhere near those pigs. By the time they got into a crate with their first litter of pigs, the level of mycoplasma they would be shedding would be back down to [a small amount].

“Now what you have is instead of a disease that we typically saw ... in 80- to 100- to 120- or 150-pound pigs, we are now seeing it in 3-, 4- and 5-week-old pigs. Now you find the need to have to vaccinate for mycoplasma in pigs not when they’re 50 to 60 pounds, but when they’re 5 days old.” He explained that it wasn’t a change in the disease that causes it to show up in younger pigs, but a change in the upset of stability of the sow.

“If you have a myco-negative sow, and you can put myco-negative gilts into it, and you can keep those pigs myco-negative all the way through their lifecycle, without a doubt, they perform better. The problem is getting all those things lined up on the same day.”

FitzSimmons also said that while producers can vaccinate for mycoplasma several times and the pig is more or less protected from that disease, they’re not taking into account the healthy bacteria getting killed by the multiple vaccinations, creating instability by leaving piglets more susceptible to other diseases

He concluded that while it seems like a basic concept to have and maintain system stability, people are continuing to develop programs that promote instability.

[http://www.wattagnet.com/Veterinarian\\_Pig\\_system\\_stability\\_works\\_better\\_than\\_dosing\\_pigs.html](http://www.wattagnet.com/Veterinarian_Pig_system_stability_works_better_than_dosing_pigs.html)