



FACTSHEET

Lameness in Pigs

Lameness has a number of welfare implications for the pig, in addition to the economic considerations for the owner. A thorough examination of the animal should be carried out, this can be difficult in the middle of a muddy field, so it is best to separate and catch the pig so we can inspect it more closely. There are a number of causes of lameness in pigs, the most common ones being listed below.

Conformation and Size

Conformation defects can cause an increased susceptibility to lameness, whilst the fast growth rates of commercial pigs can also cause problems. Feeding an appropriate ration to prevent weanling's from growing too quickly is really important, as well as only choosing to breed from good stock. Heavy pigs will get shoulder sores and ulcerated hocks from lack of bedding. Deep bedding or rubber mats must be provided as well as treating the wounds.

The cause of lameness in pigs is harder to diagnose than in other species, on account of the large mass of muscle on the upper legs and the thick skin. Well-behaved pet pigs can be made to trot up and can have their legs examined for pain and lack of movement but on the whole most of the diagnosis will be visual.

Feet

The feet should be examined for cracks and pus in the claws. Trimming the claws with a hoof knife is difficult. Sheep foot rot shears or cattle hoof trimmers are easier to use. Restraint in most cases will be necessary or even anaesthesia. For treatment of boars feet, getting them to serve a sow is very helpful. If there is pain in a claw but pus cannot be found, then a poultice with magnesium sulphate paste, cotton wool covered with gutter tape is useful. Antibiotics and NSAIDs should be given by injection initially and then in the food or water. There is good evidence that biotin supplementation of the diet is beneficial to horn growth in pigs and pet pigs are no exception.

Arthritis

If there is an arthritis, which is likely to be septic, it can be caused by a *Mycoplasma spp.* Therefore oxytetracyclines or tylosin are the antibiotics of choice. NSAIDs can be used by the oral route in pigs, or by intramuscular injection the generic names are; flunixin, meloxicam or ketoprofen.

Ligament and Tendon Injuries

Non-septic arthritis, ligament and tendon injuries are rare but possible in pigs. Sadly back problems resulting in loss of function are more common in this species and usually result in euthanasia. Luckily pet pigs are not affected by an ascending cranial infection from tail biting as seen in commercial pigs. Equally back problems are not as common in pet pigs as in commercial pigs, as they have not been bred for length of back. However Pot Bellied pigs are renowned for being obese, and excessive weight problem is likely to cause skeletal lameness.

Westover Veterinary Centre (Large animals)

Manor Farm, Old Church Road, Hainford, Norfolk NR10 3BG

Tel: 01603 899930 Fax: 01603 893640

Email: adminla@westovervets.co.uk Web: www.westovervets.co.uk