



The
GEORGE
Pig Practice

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Use of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs in Pigs

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are commonplace in many other areas of medicine, particularly in human and companion animal care. There have been fewer studies on their use in pigs, but these have proven their efficacy, and they hold a valuable place in practice. They provide pain relief and reduce inflammation and fever, in much the same way that ibuprofen, paracetamol and aspirin would for you or I.

It is important to note that in a number of these cases, an antibiotic must be administered concurrently, as they will not treat an infection (bacterial, viral, fungal), only dampen the symptoms by treating the inflammation. However, they can improve speed of recovery from a number of ailments detailed below, and treat a purely mechanical or physical problem, and so their role in aiding the industry in reducing antibiotic use is an important one. Along with the obvious – reducing pain in pigs when needed improves their welfare and therefore more than likely positively influences productivity.

Inflammation is a very damaging process within the body, so for conditions like infectious lameness, administration of an anti-inflammatory drug in a timely fashion can reduce damage to joints, the likelihood of chronic arthritis and recurrence of the condition.

Recognising pain in pigs

This can sometimes prove difficult, as pigs in the wild might mask pain in order not to attract predators. However, some signals you can look for include, but are not limited to:

- Physical difficulty in moving or altered posture
- Withdrawing and loss of normal interaction – altered behaviour
- Loss of appetite and eventually body condition
- Grinding teeth
- Staring eyes, or depressed expression
- Unusual vocalisation
- Agitation, snapping at others and vice (ear, flank and tail biting)

Options

1. Injectable for individuals: meloxicam (similar to ibuprofen for humans)
2. Oral meloxicam for individuals
3. In-water paracetamol for group treatment
4. In-water salicylates (similar to aspirin)

Uses

In the rearing herd:

- Lameness, joint ill, arthritis.
- Injury or any painful conditions, fighting, riding, tail biting, etc.

TALK SHOP

- Severe greasy pig.
- Fever, for example accompanying a virus like influenza, shown as lethargy, reduced appetite and reluctance to move about too much.
- Respiratory disease – recovery is improved with NSAIDs as the disease itself can be painful and induce severe inflammation and a fever.
- Meningitis – inflammation around the brain can kill a pig very quickly.
- Stress – anecdotally, it is said to reduce stress at weaning, transport and vaccination when administered in water for the 24 hours leading up to the event. Often used in practice when faced with bad outbreaks of fighting and vice.

In the breeding herd:

- MMA (mastitis-metritis-agalactia) – can be extremely painful and NSAIDs can help to reduce damage from toxins.
- Post-parturition, perhaps following a difficult or assisted birth.
- Painful conditions such as shoulder sores and lameness that might affect duration of nursing piglets or feed and water intakes of the sow.
- Oral meloxicam has been used for individual savaging gilts.
- Immediately prior to painful procedures like castration, nose ringing, tail docking.
- A boar with a mechanical injury from service (e.g. sore hips or strained tendons).
- Sunburn!

Of course, with every medicine, there are contraindications and limitations – talk to your vet if you wish to know more, and think NSAIDs might be of use to you and your pigs.

Antibiotic Usage

AHDB Pork have released their 2017 figures from the electronic medicine book (eMB), which represents data from 87% of the UK pigs slaughtered, and we are pleased to note further reductions in the national average of antibiotic used per kilo of pig meat sold.

- There has been a 28% reduction (183mg/PCU to 131mg/PCU) in the last 12 months, which means the industry has more than halved its usage in 2 years!

Dates for your Diary

This year our Pig Fair will be held on Tuesday 2nd and Wednesday 3rd October, at Exeter and Wincanton Racecourse respectively. We look forward to seeing you there.

Alice Brough BVM& S MRCVS