

PRRS PREVENTION PROFILE:

Dykhuis Farms team takes positive steps in controlling PRRS

By Patricia Adams, Michigan State University ANR Communications

As sow production supervisor at Dykhuis Farms Inc. (DFI), Erin Ehinger sees the value of working to stabilize the porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) virus on the family-owned 15,500-sow farrow-to-finish operation in the Holland-Zeeland area. Ehinger works on a daily basis with her dad Bob, DFI president and CEO, and brother Joe, DFI controller.

The sow operation consists of six sow units located in the Holland area, each supervised by a unit manager. The operation also includes finishing barns in the Holland area and Indiana. Ehinger oversees the sow units while Brandon Hill, finishing production manager, oversees the finishing barns.

PRRS has been an issue they've had to address.

Bob Dykhuis, Hill and Ehinger, meet with Dr. Tim Loula of Minnesota's Swine Vet Center and Dr. Duane Long, a private practice veterinarian, to discuss plans for preventative measures. Hill and Ehinger share the information with their teams, unit managers and finisher field employees, who put the plans into action.

Loula began working with Dykhuis Farms in fall 2007, and it was with his input that the DFI team began implementing new biosecurity practices that help control PRRS on the farm.

“We haven't had a new strain of PRRS in over a year. We've seen how much easier it is to work with a PRRS stable farm so we support the efforts of the PRRS project.”

—Erin Ehinger, sow production supervisor

Workers take precautions to avoid spreading the PRRS virus. Employees are required to take showers before and after reporting to work at the sow unit. Supplies are stored in a biosecure area and are disinfected before they are used. DFI built a truck wash to clean, disinfect and dry all livestock trailers before they approach the sow farms.

The flow of work is also handled very carefully. Employees never go from a finisher barn to a sow unit. Doing so might spread the virus from the finisher barns, which are more likely to hold pigs that carry the virus. Workers use a biosecurity flow chart to determine what barns to go to and in what order.

To minimize the incidence of PRRS, the team took a new look at the flow of replacement gilts and how they were prepared for life in the sow unit. The gilts now grow up in a



Back (left to right): Matt Ehinger (husband of Erin), Michael & Cara (Dykhuis) Haden, Bob Dykhuis (dad), Rachel Dykhuis, Joe Dykhuis, Jenna Dykhuis **Front (left to right):** Erin (Dykhuis) Ehinger holding daughter Lucy Ehinger, Lorrie Dykhuis (mom), Heather Dykhuis (wife of Joe) holding son Hudson Dykhuis

site south of Kalamazoo. They receive a PRRS serum so that they have exposure to the virus. By the time they are old enough to be bred, they are not shedding the virus but have immunity for the rest of their lives.

All of the sows in the herd are vaccinated quarterly with a PRRS vaccine made by MJ Biologics. If piglets test positive for PRRS at weaning, the team works with veterinarians to come up with a plan.

Sixty piglets are tested each month at each unit. If results are positive, the team takes quick action, working with veterinarians to work out a treatment plan. Finishers also test to monitor PRRS status.

The absence of PRRS leads to a healthier herd.

Ehinger said, “Our pigs grow a lot better if they don't have PRRS. Once they have PRRS, it's easier for them to get other diseases like pneumonia. Being PRRS negative lowers the risk of a group of pigs crashing.”

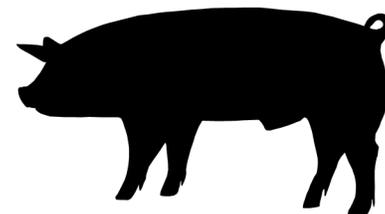
Keeping PRRS under control has helped the team focus on other concerns.

“We used to blame everything on PRRS. Now that we are producing PRRS negative pigs, we spend time looking at other issues, such as working on adjusting the environment or feeding instead of focusing on the PRRS,” Ehinger said.

Dykhuis Farms is, according to Ehinger, “very on board with the PRRS project.”

“We haven't had a new strain of PRRS in over a year. We've seen how much easier it is to work with a PRRS stable farm so we support the efforts of the PRRS project,” she said.

West Michigan PRRS Area Regional Control Project Update



The West Michigan PRRS (Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome) Area Regional Control (ARC) Project has made progress on several fronts in 2011, including efforts related to biosecurity assessment, communication, testing and surveillance efforts.

The project is guided by Jim Kober DVM of Swine Veterinary Service in Holland and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension educator Beth Ferry. Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc (BIVI), Hamilton Farm Bureau and the Michigan Pork Producers Association (MPPA) continue to provide support for activities and programs.

In August, in coordination with the BIVI summer intern project, producers in Allegan and Ottawa counties had the opportunity to complete the Production Animal Disease Risk Assessment Program (PADRAP). This tool is used to help identify and gauge biosecurity risks for individual herds and sites. About 30 PADRAP surveys were completed, which included 14 sow sites and 16 grow-finish sites.

BIVI is working to summarize and compile the results for the on-farm and regional levels, and each participating producer will receive a report that can be used when discussing herd health plans with a veterinarian. BIVI representatives will review the regional information that was collected and compare the results to past PADRAP surveys during a Dec. 7 PRRS ARC producer meeting (see Upcoming Events).

To increase knowledge about the West Michigan PRRS ARC Project the steering committee is working to increase communication about its activities, and this newsletter is a direct result of that effort. The newsletter is being supported and distributed by the MPPA and it will also be available at the MSU Extension Pork website: <http://pork.msue.msu.edu/>.

Many producers have made great strides in stabilizing their herds and producing negative pigs. Various production sites have implemented intense testing protocols to assist with identifying risks and potential

problems that could arise as they work to stabilize and eliminate PRRS. Several other sites have been depopulated and are now staying PRRS negative.

Producers who have not completed herd health plans are encouraged to work with their veterinarians to form a cleanup plan in the case of a positive herd or a general herd health plan that works to maintain a negative status. Producers can receive financial assistance in developing herd health plans by contacting Kober or Ferry.

As the project rolls into 2012, coordinators will emphasize educational events and producers are encouraged to continue working on the cleanup effort for their individual herds. As production moves into the winter months and prime PRRS season, producers should put more emphasis on biosecurity protocols and be aware of changes in herd health. Learn more about doing this at the PRRS Coordinated Agriculture Project (CAP) website: <http://www.prrs.org>.

The role of exhibition pigs in area regional control projects

As producers take on PRRS ARC projects, many factors related to preventing virus transmission need to be addressed. One factor that is a concern in Allegan and Ottawa counties is the level and intensity of infection among exhibition pigs. ARC project studies in other states have indicated that the level and intensity of PRRS infection in exhibition hogs is low, though this area needs further review in Michigan.

To explore the issue locally, Kober and Ferry worked with Allegan County Fair livestock leaders to test hogs that were exhibited at this year's fair. Youths and parents involved in the market swine project were informed of the testing procedures and given the opportunity to opt out of having their animals tested. Most (87 percent) of the youth involved in the market swine project allowed their hogs to be tested, which resulted in pooled samples from about 130 hogs. Six students from the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine assisted in the PRRS testing.

Samples were sent to Iowa State University for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing and all of the animals tested negative for PRRS. The PCR test on oral fluids (saliva) only tests for the presence of virus being shed at the time of testing. This did not indicate if any of the animals had been exposed early in life and were no longer shedding the virus, which would result in a current negative PCR test.

At the present time there is no enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test for saliva collection that can determine if a hog that tests negative on a PCR test has previously been exposed to PRRS but is no longer shedding the virus. An ELISA test for saliva collection is in the works, and all samples taken from the Allegan County Fair were frozen in preparation for the development of this technology. Completion of the ELISA testing on the exhibition pigs will allow project coordinators a better understanding of the instance of PRRS in this area of the industry.

CONTACT US

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UPCOMING EVENTS

These educational opportunities are available for producers who want to learn more about the West Michigan PRRS ARC Project. For more information on any event, please visit <http://pork.msue.msu.edu/>.

2011

» West Michigan PRRS ARC Producer Meeting

Dec. 7, 6 p.m. dinner; 7 p.m. meeting at Rock Island Restaurant 1816 M 40, Holland, MI. Free for swine producers Call Swine Veterinary Services of Michigan at 616-355-7447 to reserve seating.

» BIVI PRRS ARC&E Seminar

Dec. 2, 6 a.m. at Downtown Marriott, Chicago Ill. To register or learn more, call 816-808-3221.

2012

» West Michigan PRRS ARC Steering Committee Meeting

Feb. 1, 6:30 p.m. at Hamilton Farm Bureau.

» MSU Extension Winter Educational Meetings – PRRS Biosecurity sessions

Feb. 8, Allegan County MSU Extension office

Feb. 9, Isabella County MSU Extension office

Feb. 15, Cass County MSU Extension office

Feb. 16, Dearth Center, Coldwater Mich.

Schedule for all sessions: TQA: 1pm, PQA: 3:30 pm, Education meeting: 5 pm

» 2012 Michigan Professional Pork Producers Symposium – Air Filtration sessions

Feb. 23, 8:30 a.m., at the Lansing Center, Lansing, Mich. Contact the MPPA at 517-699-2145.

For
more event
information
visit: <http://pork.msue.msu.edu>