

Veterinary Notes for the Farmer

Discussions on First-Aid Measures

Contributed by the Livestock Division

Veterinary Notes for the Pig Farmer

Castration of Pigs

THE pig farmer is faced with castration of his male pigs in a similar manner to the sheep farmer who requires to deal with his lambs. The difference between these two classes is a difference mainly between the nature of the scrotal sac. In the pig the testicles are caught up and there is no apparent sac, whereas in the lamb the testicles are supported in a pendulous sac with a distinct neck. In the latter case several methods of castration are open to the operator, including the use of instruments for crushing the cord without causing a skin wound. This is considered advantageous by many operators, as it prevents infection of wounds, suppuration, and subsequent abscesses.

Strict Cleanliness

If the same method of operation could be adopted in the case of the pig it would probably reduce or eliminate the large number of pigs found affected with post-operation abscesses. Abscess formation at the seat of castration should not occur if strict cleanliness is observed at the time of operation and for a few days following.

A clean knife which has been sterilised by boiling should be used for the castration of pigs. The skin over the scrotum should be thoroughly washed with soap and water or a weak antiseptic lotion before the incision is made. The incision over each testicle should be large enough to enable the testicle to be enucleated without any pressure and to provide adequate drainage of the wound afterwards. No pockets should be left at the lower part of the wound (the pig being in the upright position), as pockets are liable to become infected and form abscesses.

A clean operation with a clean instrument should not require any antiseptic treatment after the operation. In practice, however, it is advisable to apply a protective dressing of tar, as the surroundings may contaminate the wound. As clean surroundings as possible should be provided, the pigs being placed in a paddock with a good covering of grass.

Suitable Age

Healing of the wound takes place quickly in young pigs, and it is advisable to castrate the pigs at an early age, about three or four weeks being a good age.

Care in the castration of pigs and the elimination of abscesses will enable more pigs to be exported. A suppurating wound may become infected further and become the site of a necrotic ulcer or sore.

Necrotic Ulcers Or Sores

UNDER this heading may be described the formation of sores or ulcers on any part of the skin of the pig. The origin of the sore is a wound or break in the skin which allows infection to gain entrance. This may occur in any part of the body, but most commonly the sores are seen about the mouth, jaw, and nose in young pigs, whereas in older pigs the sores are commonly seen on the foot, the point of the hock or knee, at the seat of castration, or on the shoulder or hip.

The sores follow infection of a wound with specific organisms which cause such a destruction of the tissues that the ulcer soon becomes covered with a thick crust of debris, the organisms appearing to spread and eat deeper and deeper into the skin and tissues. Many owners have described the condition as cancer of the skin, and many pigs have been killed when this erroneous view has been taken. Although prevention is better than treatment, it must be remembered that many affected pigs can be treated and successfully cured, and that the fattened pigs will then be passed when sent forward for slaughter.

Treatment

The treatment consists of cleaning up the sore by removing the thick

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