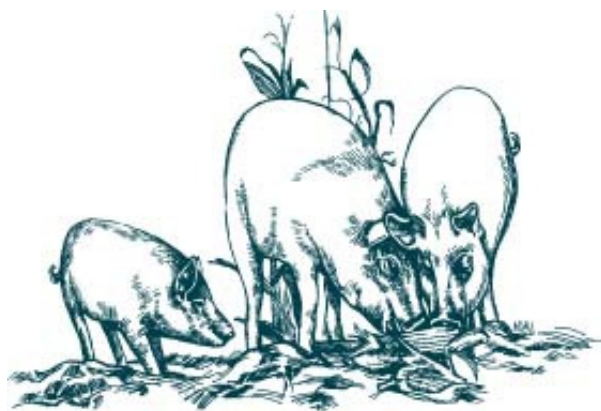




**Department: Agriculture**

## **Common diseases of small pig herds**



**M-L Penrith**

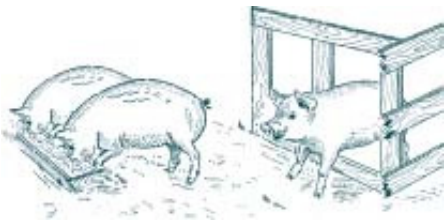
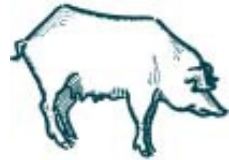
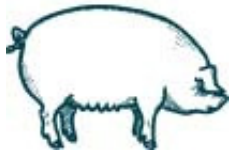
**Many diseases can be avoided by keeping  
a small number of pigs**

**In order to have healthy pigs, it is important  
to know about the common diseases  
of pigs, so that you can prevent  
and treat them**

### **Malnutrition (poor condition)**

**Malnutrition is one of the most important problems of small pig herds**

- **The pigs will appear thin and show poor growth**
- **The only bones that you should see are the shoulder blades, which should be covered by a layer of flesh so that you cannot actually feel them**
- **If the backbone, hip bones or ribs can be seen, the pig is too thin**



- **There may be a number of reasons for malnutrition. These are:**
  - **Not enough food**
  - **Poor-quality food**

- **Parasites eating too much food or causing pigs to scratch instead of eating**
- **Growing pigs need more or better quality food than adult pigs**
- **Sows feeding piglets need extra food to feed the piglets, otherwise they will start to lose weight themselves in order to produce milk. It may be difficult to regain this weight loss**
- **Pigs grow quickly. If there is not much difference between the size of piglets at 2 and 4 months, there is a problem**



## **Skin conditions**

### *Mange*

**Mange is one of the most important problems in small pig herds**



- **It is caused by small parasites called mites that live in the skin**
- **The pig becomes itchy, and scratches and rubs against the walls of the sty and other objects**
- **The coat looks dull, and there are bare patches, heavy crusts, and lines on the body that look like ribs**
- **Treatment is with spray-on or pour-on preparations or injections that also treats worms**
- **If you have only a few pigs, you and your neighbours should buy the medicine together and treat the pigs at the same time**
- **Treat adult pigs regularly; you then do not have to treat piglets, as they will not be infected**

### *Lice*

- **Pig lice are large and easy to see**
- **They can cause loss of blood**
- **Treat them with sprays**



## *Fly damage*

- Flies can enter wounds and delay healing
- Control flies by using traps, flypapers and sprays (do not spray the pig food)
- Good hygiene is important to prevent flies



## *Greasy pig disease*

- The pig develops yellowish crusts on the snout, around the mouth and behind the ears. These can spread all over the body
- The disease is treated with antibiotic injections



## *Diamond skin disease*

- Diamond skin disease was named this way because affected pigs develop large dark-red patches on the skin
- This disease can cause death
- It is treated with antibiotic injections
- You can vaccinate pigs to prevent the disease

## **Worms**

### *Roundworms*

- Roundworms live in the gut and take food from the pig. The pig can therefore become thin
- Roundworms also move through the body and may cause lung problems

- They cause "milk spots" in the liver
- Treat with worm remedies. Control with medicine in the food is useful
- When the worms die suddenly after treatment, they can block the gut and cause sudden death

### *Tapeworms (measles)*

- Pork measles is caused by tapeworms which live in the muscles of pigs
- They do not usually affect the pig, but can lead to pain and the pig may find it difficult to move around
- When people eat undercooked measly pork, the worms develop inside the people, and can make them very sick
- These worms can be controlled by preventing the pigs from wandering about where they can feed on human faeces, and by making sure that people working with pigs use toilets
- Pigs cannot be treated for this disease



### Lameness

- Pigs are heavy compared to the size of their feet and can easily hurt their feet if there are cracks in the floor or sharp surfaces
- Pigs can also develop arthritis (sore joints) fairly easily from damage or diseases
- They will not place weight on the sore leg
- Pigs that sit or lie and do not get up when food is given, are lame
- Examine the pig for sores and swellings
- If there are no obvious sores or swellings, get help from a veterinarian, because it may be best to slaughter the pig



### Abscesses

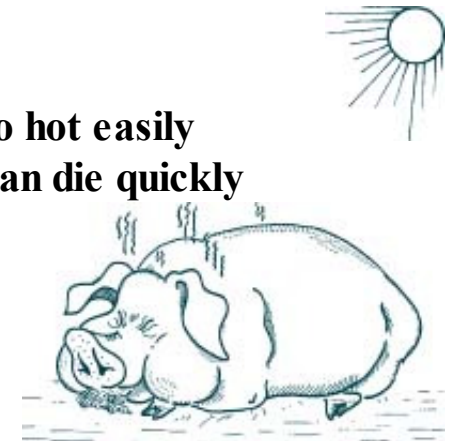
- Injuries from fighting or injections can result in abscesses
- Abscesses are difficult to treat and may need surgery by a veterinarian

## Fever

- **Many serious diseases start with fever**
- **Pigs stop eating, lie around, may huddle together, and may become red or purple on the belly, legs and ears. They stay close to water, and prefer to be in the shade**
- **African swine fever is the most serious disease of pigs in Africa. Most pigs die after having a fever. This disease should be reported to a veterinarian. There is no treatment or vaccine, and the pigs must be killed. In South Africa, pigs may get African swine fever in parts of the Northern, North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga provinces where warthogs are infected. These areas are known as the African swine fever control zone**
- **Other fevers may be cured by treatment with antibiotics**

## Heatstroke

- **Pigs that have no shade can suffer heatstroke in hot weather because they become too hot easily**
- **They lie down, breathe heavily (pant), foam at the mouth, become red (flushed), and can die quickly**
- **Spray with water to cool them down and provide shade**

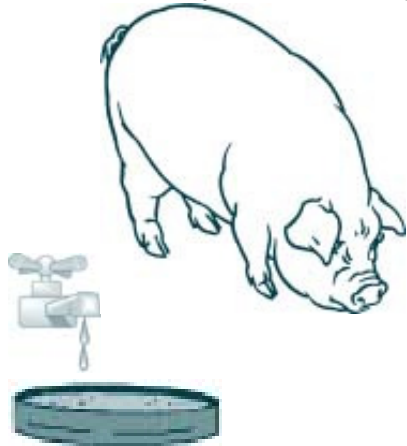


## Salt poisoning

- **Some feeds, especially swill from restaurants, may contain a great deal of salt**
- **If pigs can drink as much water as they like, this is not a serious problem**
- **If the pigs cannot drink water, they can die of salt poisoning**
- **Pigs appear to be blind, fall over, and may vomit and have seizures resembling epileptic fits. They die quickly**
- **A good water supply prevents this disease**

## Diarrhoea

- **Diarrhoea is most likely to occur when many pigs are crowded together**
- **It is usually seen in piglets**
- **It may occur after a change in food, and the piglets may still look healthy and continue to eat**
- **It can result from a disease, and the pigs then stop eating and look sick. You should get help from a veterinarian or animal health technician**
- **Piglets can die quickly from diarrhoea if they stop eating and drinking**
- **If a pig dies and you open up the carcass, the intestines may look red and the contents are usually watery and even bloody. The lining may look rough with dry, yellowish material sticking to it**



## **Pneumonia**

- **Pigs with pneumonia have difficulty in breathing, may stop eating, and there may be discharges from the eyes and nose**
- **You should get help from a veterinarian or animal health technician, because not all antibiotics are good for treating pneumonia**
- **If a pig dies from pneumonia and you open up the chest of the carcass, the lungs look solid and red, and there may be pus**



## Preventive measures

- Hygiene is important in preventing pig diseases
- Keep pigs in pens that are well drained and clean these every day
- Make sure that clean fresh drinking water is always available
- Clean feeding troughs and containers before putting in fresh feed
- Control flies by removing dung and covering it to make compost
- Store feed in a clean, dry, rat-proof place



## In conclusion

**If you know about the different diseases which pigs can get, you can either prevent or treat them in time and avoid pigs dying from disease**

**For further information speak to  
your state or private veterinarian**

**or**

***Animal Health for Developing Farmers*  
at the ARC-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute  
Private Bag X05, Onderstepoort 0110**



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