Common Skin Lesions in Baby Pigs

William S. Monlux
Iowa State University

John C. Peckham
Iowa Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian

Part of the Large or Food Animal and Equine Medicine Commons, and the Veterinary Pathology and Pathobiology Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian/vol23/iss3/4
Common Skin Lesions in Baby Pigs

William S. Monlux D.V.M., PhD.*
John C. Peckham D.V.M.**

Greasy pig disease and parakeratosis focused considerable attention on the skin of the pig and pointed out how critical cutaneous disease can be. The importance of other skin lesions in baby pigs is often overlooked and considerable mortality may occur before their significance is recognized.

Epitheliogenesis imperfecta (Fig. 1) is a very common cutaneous defect in the baby pig. In many instances it is probably a heritable cutaneous skin lesion. Because the new born pig is without appreciable amounts of hair, the skin lesion is often overlooked. At other times, even though the skin is observed to be absent in an area, it is speculated that the skin was lost as the result of an injury received during birth. Stillborn pigs often show this epithelial defect thus indicating that more than one disturbance in development may be present.

Since the area of the body over which the imperfection occurs lacks the cutaneous barrier against bacterial invasion and since the humoral and cellular defenses of the baby pig are poorly developed at this time, it is just a matter of a few hours or at most a few days before death occurs from septicemia.

A very common skin disease is the facial dermatitis (Fig. 2) occurring on the lateral sides of the face of nursing pigs as the result of injury from tusks. The struggling baby pigs, in very close proximity to each other and competing for udder space and time, lacerate their litter mates with their tusks. The sides of the face become covered with milk, saliva and blood.

* Dr. Monlux is a professor in Veterinary Pathology at Iowa State University.
** Dr. Peckham is an instructor in the Iowa Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory Ames, Iowa.

Fig. 1. Epitheliogenesis imperfecta

Fig. 2. Facial dermatitis
Contaminating bacteria from the bedding and the skin of the sow grow and multiply in this medium and invade the skin wounds. Soon the area becomes covered with a thick crust of exudate. Staphylococci are especially common invaders. The result is a focal ulcerative dermatitis or a rapidly spreading phlegmon of the head and neck. In either case death may be the result. Quite often this cutaneous lesion is the source of bacteria which localize in joints and cause a polyarthritis. The facial injury can be prevented by removing the tusks from the baby pigs before the lacerations have been inflicted.

Another equally important cutaneous lesion, which is often overlooked, is the abrasion which occurs in the skin of the anterior surface of the knees of baby pigs. This abrasion occurs when the pigs, actively competing for udder space and time, rub their knees on the floor. As they push and slide back and forth on the floor, extensive injury to the skin over the carpal joints occurs (Fig. 3). Concrete floors, because of their rough surface, cause the greatest amount of injury. Adequate bedding will prevent this type of injury.

Injury to the claws of baby pigs is quite common and, at times, both of the chief claws are completely destroyed. Usually the cause is not determined. It may be the result of injury from disinfectants persisting on the floor of the pen. Dirty pens may cause the pigs to macerate their feet in manure. In cold weather, wet manure is particularly prone to cause injury. Macerated feet have a greatly reduced ability to withstand bacterial invasion. If the baby pigs walk in snow, stand on ice or stand in cold water, injury to the soft delicate claws and even freezing of the feet may occur. Burning of the claws may occur when pens are warmed with hot water or steam pipes (Fig. 5). If the pipes are not enclosed,
Fig. 5. Injury to claws

the baby pigs step on the pipes and injure their feet. Greasy pig disease also causes injury to the claws. No matter what the primary etiologic factor, once the claws or the integument of the foot is injured, it is comparatively easy for bacteria to enter the foot. There the bacteria may produce a suppurative dermatitis, ulcerative dermatitis, suppurative pododermatitis, phlegmon of the foot or may even produce a septicemia which may terminate in the death of the pig.

(Continued from page 135)

REFERENCES


