

Managing Stress Dealing with PED Virus Industry-wide

On September 22 Manitoba Pork updated the PED virus situation in Manitoba reporting three new cases since September 8, bringing the total to 76 in this outbreak. Infected premises (IPs) #74, #75 and #76 are finisher sites, which appears to be a recurrence of shedding from animals that producers moved to these locations.

"On a positive note, 36 previously infected premises have achieved PED Transitional status, meaning that all the animals on the site are no longer clinically sick," said Manitoba Pork. "As well, certain groups of animals on the site are no longer shedding the virus. On sow farms, it also means that the site can wean PED negative piglets. We can expect to find a few new cases, mostly from direct pig movements and from a regional spread, which highlights the need for swine farms in southeast Manitoba to remain vigilant about biosecurity."

The battle continues as the Manitoba pork industry continues to face PED, recent infected premises (IPs) #67 to #73 include one sow site, three nursery sites, and three finisher sites.

"Unfortunately, IP #68, a sow farm, and IP #73, a nursery site, are both new infections and pose an increased risk to neighboring farms," said the most recent update from Manitoba Pork Council. "The other five sites appear to be a recurrence of shedding from pigs that came from previously infected sites."

Bob Kleinsasser, hog boss at the Suncrest Colony near Steinbach, MB talked candidly about what the PED virus outbreak while still, PED-free has meant to them.

"At first, it really, really was hard for us. We just couldn't wrap it around if it would happen what would we do and we took it too personally, but now after months of this, we did a lot of different things," said Bob sitting in their kitchen.

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"We had to refocus on our biosecurity, operate smarter and then there's only so much you can do. You can't let it affect your personal life and stuff like that so we just try to do our best to keep it up, hold it out of the environment so if it's not around the barn it can't go in the barn. It's tough. I can almost say it's no fun anymore," he added.

When the first outbreak occurred some years back, Claude Vielfaure of HyLife said it was almost like he hated to open that barn door in the morning.

"It's the first thing you do when you walk in there you go see, but we're pretty confident with the dear Lord around, and with prayer and with a lot of input from everybody on the whole farm and the industry, it will turn out okay," he said.

As far as a contingency plan for their farm, there is only one infect the whole lot to create immunity, and clean out the barn.

"There's one plan if it happens: Yeah, you gotta do what you gotta do," said Kleinsasser. "It wouldn't be fun. We've talked to a lot of people who had it and have it, and some of them stated that they never want to see another pig in their life, it's affected them that hard."

Janice Goldsborough, the Human Resources and Training Coordinator with Manitoba Pork said swine barn managers should watch for signs of fatigue among workers dealing with PED virus. "Having to deal with sick animals, especially the baby piglets, is resulting in a lot of stress on farm workers," said Goldsborough. "It could be similar to PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, when people are on a daily basis having to deal with the poor little pigs that either pass away or they have to be put down. After a while, that can get very trying on somebody who's dealing with that almost every day."

Goldsborough said the symptoms can vary.

The factors are just the daily workings of the barn and trying to make sure they're not spreading the disease to other areas. It gets very trying and very tiring after a while both physically but as well as mentally.

"The symptoms can vary from person to person," she said. "Some of it could be that they're not sleeping or they're feeling drained. They might be having nightmares if they are sleeping, poor concentration, there could be memory problems, difficulty thinking, headaches, just an overall feeling of not being able to cope. It can add up for people if they don't stop and focus on themselves and

looking after themselves."

Goldsborough said for the employee; it's essential to have somebody there to talk to, whether it's family or friends, so as not to keep it bottle up inside.

There is help out there, and they have to look after themselves. If they don't take care of themselves, it's going to be difficult for other people too.

They have to make sure that they're getting rest, that they're eating properly, and that they're taking some time for themselves.

Even during the work day, just taking half an hour break to sit and have their lunch, maybe check their phones or Facebook or whatever just to give them a mental break from their job and what they have to do, she said.

Goldsborough said from a human resource perspective; the industry must look after the people who are responsible for the success of the farms, and that's the people who work there.

Remember to check the website for most recent updates. www.manitobapork.com/animal-care/swine-health/ped •

— By Harry Siemens



Janice Goldsborough, Human Resources and Training Coordinator with Manitoba Pork. Photo supplied.

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