



Three 'Non-Negotiables' for Vaccinating Young Pigs



By: **Wesley Lyons**,
DVM, Pipestone Veterinary Services,
Driving Force Show Pig

When it comes to raising and investing in show pigs, our goal is to keep them healthy and productive in preparation for the show ring. The first few weeks of a piglet's life are critical for setting them up with a strong foundation to help them develop immunity and protect them throughout their show career.

Setting Up Piglets With a Healthy Foundation

The First 24 Hours

Those of us well-versed in raising young pigs know the important role colostrum plays in a piglet's first 24 hours of life. Colostrum from a piglet's birth sow will provide it with the necessary antibodies it needs to withstand initial exposure to pathogens like circovirus, *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae* and PRRS, to name a few. As a reference, each piglet needs the equivalent of a 12-ounce can of soda to have adequate transfer of immunity. Immediately following birth, dry off piglets to warm them up and proactively place them on a sow's teat to get them nursing. This ensures they will begin absorbing life-saving maternal antibodies.

The First Few Weeks

For the first few weeks of a piglet's life, nursing from the sow is their only source of protective antibodies and nutrients critical for growth and development. Monitoring the piglets' gut fill as well as the sow's underline will provide confidence the piglets are still receiving adequate nutrition from their sow. At around 3 to 5 weeks of age, it's time to wean young pigs from their cozy environment with their mom into a nursery environment. Being introduced to a new diet and new environment can be a stressful time for young pigs. Stress is the ultimate immune-suppressor, and these newly weaned piglets are in no short supply of cortisol. This is where vaccines come into play.

Three Non-negotiable Vaccines for Young Pigs

Most vaccines can be given starting at 3 weeks of age. When vaccinating young pigs for the first time, I tell my clients the three non-negotiable vaccines to protect young pigs include:

- Porcine circovirus Type 2 (PCV2)
- *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae* (*M. hyo*)
- Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) (at the discretion of the herd veterinarian and based on the health and flow of pigs)

These diseases are some of the most prevalent among pigs, whether commercially raised pigs or show pigs, and can be the most detrimental to pig health and productivity. For show pigs especially, exposure to these disease-causing pathogens increases significantly when traveling for shows and commingling with pigs outside of their home farm. With this increased potential for exposures, I also recommend vaccinating against:

- Ileitis
- Influenza A virus in swine (IAV-S)
- Erysipelas

When buying show pigs at the feeder pig stage, it's important to:

- Keep new pigs isolated from other pigs in the barn and minimize nose-to-nose contact.

- Request health papers for interstate travel of all pigs.
- Know what vaccines the pigs received at weaning (including age and dose).
- Work with a veterinarian to discuss pig health history and determine what boosters are needed and when.

Preventive care through young pig care and vaccination is just one piece of the puzzle that will set pigs up for success. An ounce of prevention is worth everything, especially when we think about the devastating and costly impacts that diseases pose.

To learn more about how you can protect the health of your show pigs, visit DrivingForceShowPig.com.

About Wesley Lyons, DVM

Dr. Lyons joined the Pipestone Veterinary Services team in 2016. He earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine. Prior to joining Pipestone, he worked for Pig Improvement Company and a mixed animal veterinary practice.

About Driving Force Show Pig

Driving Force Show Pig is the official show pig brand of PIPESTONE, working to provide show pig breeders

and showmen with the necessary products and resources to raise champions. Success is totally dependent on your drive. That is why we at Driving Force provide high-quality products to help you get there. Simply order our kits securely online and receive a quick and easy delivery from our biosecure warehouse. Now all you need to do is drive forward and not look back. ■



Scan the QR code to learn more about Driving Force Show Pigs.



Biosecurity Best Practices to Introduce Pigs Into Your Show Barn

Bringing home new show pigs is an exciting time. In addition to preventive care and vaccination of young pigs, biosecurity is another important part of the equation to minimize disease spread and keep

pigs healthy. Below are a few biosecurity measures to keep in mind when bringing home new pigs.

- Keep new animals separated for a minimum of two weeks before introducing them to their new herd mates.
 - If isolation isn't possible and pigs need to be commingled, the next best option is prophylactic antibiotic treatment with a broad-spectrum, long-lasting antibiotic.

- Clean and disinfect trailers, pens, water lines and feeding equipment with a veterinary-recommended disinfectant.
- Frequently monitor pigs for clinical signs.
- Establish a veterinarian-client-patient relationship, also known as a VCPR, so the veterinarian can review the health history and vaccination programs of your newly purchased pigs. ■