

Hog Lice and Mange Affect Pork Production

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In order to meet pork production demands and increase profits every effort should be made to reduce losses to a minimum as well as to make maximum use of available feeds. To reduce pig losses, good management, sanitation, and the control of diseases and parasites are essential. Of the various parasites, the two external species, hog louse and scab mite are often of very great importance. On the other hand, both of these pests can be kept under complete control with reasonable attention to sanitation, use of insecticides and good management.

Hog Louse.—This is the largest species of blood-sucking louse found infesting farm animals. When full-grown, it is about one-fourth inch in length. It confines its attack entirely to hogs. Its large size makes it rather easy to see though its color matches the skin of the host. It injures the host by piercing its skin and sucking its blood. This irritation causes the hog to rub against posts or other objects. Severely infested animals fail to take on flesh properly. Also, at farrowing time their irritation may cause sows to crush some of the pigs. Likewise, the lice quickly migrate to the young pigs, often harming them seriously. There is a common saying among hog raisers that young pigs are born lousy.

The hog louse is active all winter, feeding and cementing its whitish eggs to the base of the hair, especially on the lower part of the host's body. Under favorable conditions, the young lice feed and mature in two or three weeks when they are ready to start another generation. This means that they breed rapidly and if not controlled may soon cause severe injury. They collect in greatest abundance in and about the ears and in folds of the skin.

Control.—Because of their tough hide one may use any one of a number of the common oil and creosote mixtures with reasonable safety on hogs to control lice. These may be applied as sprays, mopped on, as dips, on water in wallows or on rubbing posts. However, we now have newer, and more effective insecticides for controlling hog lice. Either DDT or benzene hexachloride may be applied as dusts or sprayed or mopped on with safety and with good results. When hog mange is not also a problem use DDT rather than BHC.

The 10 per cent DDT dust applied liberally will control lice but in 10 days it should be repeated to kill newly hatched young as it will not destroy the eggs. Some prefer to apply it by spraying or mopping it onto the infested portions of the animal, or for dipping. As a spray or dip use 8 to 10 pounds of the 50 per cent wettable DDT powder, or, if you wish, two gallons of the 25 per cent DDT emulsion to 100 gallons of water and repeat the treatment in two weeks.

Mange Mite.—This is a very small, light-colored, 8-legged skin mite. Forms of this same mite may also attack sheep, horses, and cattle. Infested hogs scratch and rub even more vigorously than when infested with lice. Infested animals have the skin about the ears, eyes, neck and back inflamed, scurfy, scabby, cracked, or covered with pimples. The mites burrowing in the skin cause the irritation which may become so severe that the animals make no gains. The mites spread from one animal to another and both eggs and mites may remain alive on rubbing posts or about the bedding for several weeks.

Control.—When possible, it is better to treat infested animals in a dipping vat, though careful spraying or mopping or thorough wetting by using a sprinkling can is effective. Crude petroleum and creosote dips are safe and effective though 8 to 10 pounds of the 50 per cent wettable benzene hexachloride of 6 per cent gamma isomer in 100 gallons of water is rapidly replacing the older mange treatments. The BHC has been found to be the most effective mixture for controlling hog mange but it must be used right. While still more or less experimental in nature it has been found to be safe and effective for treating hog houses and pens. It is effective on sows ahead of farrowing, and on pigs and mature animals. However, the use of BHC should be discontinued 60 days before slaughtering to make sure the meat does not retain the musty taste of BHC. The new odorless BHC (Lindane) now on the market should be used for mange as recommended on the container.

One dipping may clean up an infestation, but in severe cases a second treatment should be given in two weeks. While controlling mange it will also control lice. All animals in a herd should be treated and pens harboring affected animals should be thoroughly disinfected to prevent reinfestation.

If boars or brood sows are purchased and added to the herd they should be carefully checked for possible evidence of scab. If found affected, treat them before allowing them to mingle with the clean herd. Also, affected animals should be treated before they are ready for the market in order to prevent contamination of trucks, railroad cars, stockyards and other animals which may later come in contact with such equipment. In some regions, mange on hogs, cattle, and horses, and scab on sheep are so serious that special quarantine control regulations have been enacted.