

Swine Weigh-in Protocol

By Dr. Jim McKean

These methods have been proven reasonably successful over the past decade. The general format is to reduce the opportunities to spread an infectious disease from one group to another.

It is preferred that central weigh-in procedures be employed rather than going from farm to farm, because bio-security can be better controlled in that situation. None of the following are a guarantee that an infectious disease organism will not be spread during the weigh-in procedures, but they have been successful with minimizing PRV spread. It is assumed that counties will require that pigs originate from herds not known to be infected with PRV.

The following are bullet points for consideration to reduce the risk for an infectious disease organism to spread:

- 1) The weigh-in procedure should be in an open area that can be cleaned between groups (or be in a position to move the weigh-in area to a clean spot if the original can't be disinfected after contamination). If in a roofed area it should be well ventilated, preferably with a cross wind.
- 2) The area for parking trucks awaiting weigh-in should be sufficient to allow them to be spread out. For counties with large numbers to weigh, scheduling times for individual weigh-ins or multiple sites may reduce the number of people waiting at any time.
- 3) The spring scales should be situated so that the trucks can back up to the weighing area. One truck at a time is weighed.
- 4) Between groups, disinfect all equipment; taggers, notchers, tattoo pliers, chains, ropes, and hands of volunteer helpers.
- 5) The weigh-in crew should have cover-alls and boots to wear that can be cleaned between groups. Disinfectant solution should be provided to wash boots between groups, if necessary. Multiple coveralls should be considered. The white disposable types are preferred because they protect the crew but can be disposed of if contaminated with feces or urine during a weighing.
- 6) The owner/4-H'er handles the pigs and hands one to the weigh-in crew. OB chains disinfected between groups, baler twine and other disposable materials can be used to suspend the pig on the scales. Other information is recorded. The weighed pig is handed back to the youth/owner without touching the ground. Process is repeated until the group is completed and the truck pulls out.

Some counties may be considering requiring PRV vaccination before or at the weigh-in. Generally if these pigs are farrowed from PRV vaccinated sows, PRV vaccination of grower pigs before 12-14 weeks is not recommended because of maternal immunity interferences. In the stage II counties grower pigs should be vaccinated after 12-14 weeks of age to comply with the IDALS requirements.

If these considerations are followed it would be anticipated that weigh-ins will not be a source of disease spread in a county.