

## No doubts over live vaccine

### **WATER-TIGHT:**

**Pig producer Karsten Kreutzfeldt used to have doubts about live vaccines until he tried vaccinating his own pigs against *Lawsonia*. Vaccination proved to be simple, effective and safe and his earlier scepticism was finally overcome.**

*By Anne Olsen*

Karsten Kreutzfeldt from Alrø in Odder has been using the new *Lawsonia* vaccine in his pigs for six months now. Initially, he took part in a trial where the vaccine was paid for by the manufacturer, Boehringer Ingelheim; after the trial had finished, he decided to continue vaccinating to learn more about the vaccination and its effects on his fattening pigs.

After six months, Karsten acknowledges that the results are promising and that the vaccine is easy to administer via the pigs' drinking water. Just as importantly, his doubts about live vaccines have been laid to rest.

### **Scepticism turns to acceptance**

"The PRRS which affected my herd some while ago was caused by vaccinating with a live vaccine, so I was still a bit sceptical when the vet suggested we should use a live vaccine to vaccinate my piglets against *Lawsonia*," says Karsten, who has a 350-sow herd and produces over 6000 slaughter pigs a year. "But after he'd explained more about the benefits of the vaccine, I decided to take the plunge."

Karsten's vet, Jens Sørensen of the Odder Veterinary Clinic, says there is no reason to worry about using live vaccines so long as they are administered properly. This view is confirmed by the results of the trials which formed the basis of the licence application for the new *Lawsonia* vaccine.

"Both the trial results and the field results obtained with the vaccine in other countries confirm there are no grounds for concern on the safety front," says Jens. It is essential to remember, he adds, that *Lawsonia* is a bacterial pathogen, not a viral one like PRRS. A further point to bear in mind is that the new vaccine is based on a Danish isolate.

"The *Lawsonia* isolate used in the vaccine is virtually identical to the isolates recovered from the field, so that piglets who have been vaccinated will not encounter a new variant of the bacterium," explains Jens. "I think this should remove any vestige of doubt for those who may have concerns about the safety of the vaccine."

### **Good becomes better**

Karsten Kreutzfeldt has been vaccinating his piglets against *Lawsonia* for six months, and results from the first nine weeks alone show that average daily weight gain in the weaner nursery rose by 29 g from 481 to 510 g.

The effect of the vaccine on fattening performance has not yet been calculated, but Karsten has already noticed improvements in the fattening herd as a result of vaccinating against *Lawsonia*. Previously, he had needed to treat whole groups of pigs for *Lawsonia* in the second week after they had been transferred to the fattening unit but, since the start of the vaccination programme, no treatment for *Lawsonia* has been necessary at all.

### **Correct strategy is important**

Jens Sørensen emphasises the importance of a correct vaccination strategy. "Before Karsten started vaccinating, a detailed investigation was carried out to determine exactly when the pigs were being infected with *Lawsonia*," he explains. "The time at which pigs become infected determines the timing of the vaccination, which is of crucial importance for obtaining the optimum effect."

On the basis of the investigation carried out in Karsten's herd, Jens decided that pigs should be vaccinated two weeks after weaning. But he is quick to stress that the timing of the vaccination always depends on the time of infection, so that, in another herd, the age at which the vaccine is given could well be different.

### **Vaccination programme continues**

To learn more about the vaccine's effect on his fattening pigs, Karsten Kreutzfeldt is continuing to vaccinate against *Lawsonia*.

"The trial protocol we're working to involves weighing both the weaners and the fatteners individually," says Jens Sørensen. "This should provide more information about weight gain from vaccination to slaughter, and should tell us whether there is a particular increase in weight gain in the weaner nursery - or the fattening unit. It's essential to know this if vaccinated weaners are going to be sold when they've reached 30 kg, because one of the key questions is what premium slaughter pig producers should pay to buy piglets which have been vaccinated against *Lawsonia*".

Jens also looks forward to a full evaluation of the vaccine being carried out under the auspices of *Dansk Svineproduktion*.\*

"Such an evaluation would provide hard data on the profit to be made by vaccinating with Enterisol Ileitis vet. once the DKK 10 that each dose of the vaccine costs has been taken into account."

Caption to photo:

#### **METHOD:**

*Karsten Kreutzfeldt finds it easy and convenient to vaccinate his piglets via their drinking water. An old soda siphon bottle is just the right size for Karsten to prepare a mixture of the vaccine with skimmed milk, which is then delivered to the piglets via a proportioner.*

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\* Danish Pig Production (a pig producers' organisation which is responsible for national research and development tasks relating to the live pig and which conducts trials in approx. 100 pig herds attached to the Danish Applied Pig Research Scheme)