INDIVIDUAL PIG CARE (IPC) MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IMPROVES HEALTH STATUS IN NURSERY PIGS IN A LOW-HEALTH STATUS FARM

E. Vizcaíno[1], M.L. Rosas[2], A. Dereu[3], P. Doncecchi[3], C. Piñeiro[1], J. Morales[1]

[1]PigCHAMP Pro Europa, Spain; [2]Swine vet practitioner, Italy; [3]Zoetis - EuAFME, France;

Corresponding author: joaquin.morales@pigchamp-pro.com

INTRODUCTION

The individual pig care (IPC) is a management program based in daily individual observation of the pigs, early detection of husbandry and health problems and prompt and accurate reaction to them, enabled by a fast and effective data collection and processing.

The use of the IPC program delivers a good return on investment, by reducing the medication costs, mortality rate and improving productive performance.

The objective of the present study was to assess the benefits of the IPC program in a low-health status Spanish herd in nursery pigs based on health status.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The experiment was conducted in a farrow-to-finish commercial farm in Spain, with high mortality and percentage of wasted pigs in the nursery phase. Traditionally, in mass medication was used in this phase and only few antibiotic injections were applied individually.

Experimental treatments: The **experimental unit** was the weekly batch of about 150 weaned piglets (28 days of age).

- **Control group:** batches of piglets weaned from August 2012 to July 2013. Traditional management.
- **IPC group:** batches of piglets weaned from August 2013 to October 2013.IPC program was applied.

IPC program:

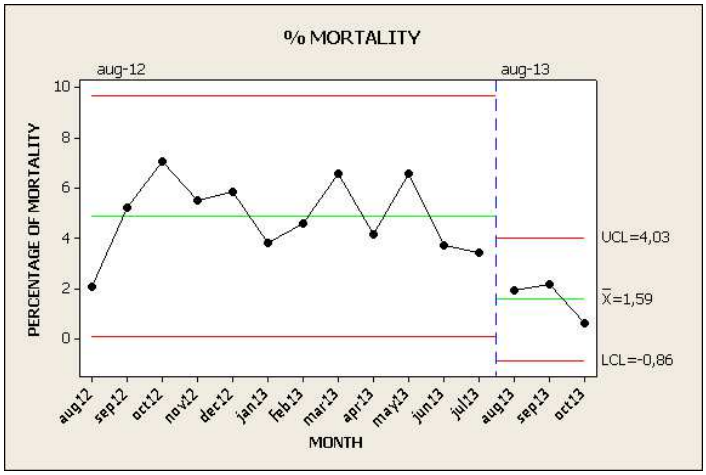
Sick pigs were scored and symptoms were quantified according to the severity (**A-mild signs of disease; B-medium; C-serious and D-very serious or dying**) and type of disease . Clinical signs and mortality were monitored in each batch from weaning at 28 d of age to 60 d of age (about 20 kg BW)

The effect of IPC was assessed analyzing the evolution of the percentage of mortality using the statistical process control of the Minitab software (v 16).

RESULTS

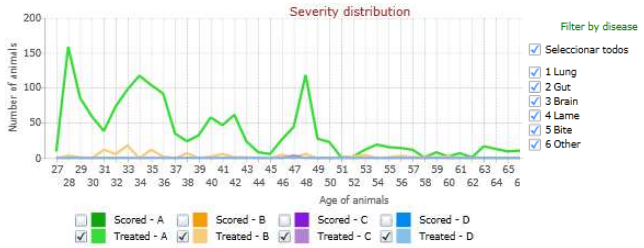
- Percentage of mortality was 4.89 % in the period August 2012 to July 2013, with peaks in some batches higher than 6.0% (**Figure 1**).
- After the IPC implementation, percentage of mortality was significantly reduced (1.59% mean value).

Figure 1. Percentage of mortality in nursery phase before and after the IPC program application.



Percentage of mortality was reduced based on an early detection of clinical signs, which allowed farm caregivers applying the right antibiotic at an early stage of disease, which increases probability of success. Figure 2 shows the number of piglets treated with individual antibiotic interventions since IPC program is used, depending on severity of disease.

Figure 2. Number of piglets treated through the nursery phase depending on severity of disease (A, B, C, or D)



Most of cases were treated for mild signs of disease (A-cases), indicating that detection of disease is correct in an early stage.

CONCLUSIONS

- The early detection of symptoms through IPC resulted in optimal recovery of pigs reared in poor health status conditions, which led to reduced mortality.
- Registration and monitoring of health indicators and antimicrobials used under the IPC protocol promoted a more judicious use of medication.

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