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Swine External Pests

External parasites not only annoy livestock but also limit production. Damage to swine includes open wounds and skin irritations causing stress and discomfort.

Hog lice are the largest louse that infect domestic animals at nearly a quarter inch long. The louse's slate-blue color blends with the skin. Lice are first noticed in small clumps inside the ear or in neck skinfolds. These biting lice cause the skin to thicken and crack and is tender. Hog lice will attack pigs of any age or condition; however, stress increases vulnerability. This pest is spread through contact with infected animals. In adult hogs, the damage is primarily irritation. Infested animals often scratch or rub against objects. Animals become restless, eat less and lose weight. The hog louse can contribute to anemia in young pigs and can transmit other swine diseases.

Hog mange is caused by tiny mites that burrow through the skin, making short thread-like tunnels. Clues to a mange outbreak include scratching, rubbing and the presence of inflamed areas. The skin around the eyes, ears and along the backbone becomes scaly and inflamed. Hairs become stiff and stand upright, giving the animals a rough, unkempt appearance. Mange-infested pigs drop in growth rates and lose vitality. Secondary infections can move into areas where mites have burrowed. Lesions attract flies and magnify the situation. Mange is highly contagious. In addition, these mites complete a generation in just two weeks.

Lice and mange are managed in a similar manner. Good management and prevention will go a long way. New animals should be isolated and treated for internal and external parasites before being introduced into the herd.

Swine operations often produce large quantities of fly-breeding material. The most common is the housefly. Large populations are a nuisance to the operation and neighbors. The more dangerous, but generally fewer in population, is the stable fly. While the housefly is only a premise pest, the stable fly will take blood meals. The house and stable flies are about the same size, but the stable fly is darker gray. They also have similar life cycles, but the stable fly will only breed in decaying organic material. Adults can live 20 to 30 days, and a female can lay 200 to 400 eggs in her lifetime. The flies may overwinter as adults and immatures. These flies are important from the standpoint of annoyance and blood loss. They are also potential vectors of some swine diseases like leptospirosis and hog cholera. Sanitation is a must to successfully

manage flies. Elimination of breeding sites rather than reliance on chemical control will maintain fly populations at a manageable level.

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