

Aujeszky's disease in dogs - more confirmed cases

Aujeszky's disease is endemic in North Island pig herds. An abattoir survey carried out over a twelve month period indicated that up to 100 herds may be infected.

Pigs are the principle reservoir of the Aujeszky's disease virus but the disease can affect dogs, cats, cattle, sheep and goats with fatal consequences. Disease in these animals may be the only indicator of the presence of the Aujeszky virus in an associated pig herd.

The first case of Aujeszky's disease in a New Zealand dog was reported in 1988.² Two further cases, also from the Central Waikato, were confirmed in 1989.

An Aujeszky's disease eradication program was launched in December 1989, but whilst the infection is prevalent in North Island pig herds, more cases in dogs can be expected.

The outbreak

An Aujeszky's disease epidemic was confirmed in a 120 sow piggery. There was an abnormal number of stillbirths, and most suckling pigs were dying showing neurological signs. Some of the fattening pigs were reported to cough and sneeze. The pig farmer observed feral cats dying in tetanic convulsions nearby the piggery. His own dogs had free access to consume dead piglets.

During the epidemic, the pig farmer's two bitches exhibited severe onset of

neurological signs; extreme salivation, ataxia, facial muscle tremor and assumed pruritis leading to self mutilation. One died and the other was euthanatized within 24 hours of the onset of signs. Aujeszky's disease was confirmed by histological examination and virus isolation.



Figure 1: Copious salivation and extreme pruritis are typical signs of Aujeszky's disease in the dog.

The farmer introduced three sows just prior to the epidemic. It is assumed that these were the source of infection and that the herd was previously free from infection. This story highlights the risks pig farmers take if the Aujeszky's disease status of purchased replacements is not known.

Aujeszky's disease is a notifiable disease. The case confirms the importance of laboratory back-up in cases of intense pruritis, and sudden onset of neurological signs in dogs, even if there is no apparent access to pigs.

Reference

- 1 Read, D H, Sinclair, J A, 1988 : Aujeszky's disease in a dog. *Surveillance* 15(2) : 13.

D E Lake
Ruakura Animal Health Laboratory

C R Hutchings and N G Aalders
Veterinary Clinic, Morrinsville



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