

Improvest Information

A new method of swine castration was recently approved by the FDA for use in the swine industry. It is a form of castration that is given through two injections for growing pigs that temporarily, immunologically blocks the production of the steroids that are the primary source of “off odors” in pork from boars.

The process involves two injections to be given to boar pigs to make them a barrow. The first injection, given at 9 weeks of age or older, simply primes the pig’s immune system. The second does is given at least four weeks after the priming does and a minimum of 3 weeks before market. Two weeks after the second does, a quality assurance inspection takes place. Thus, pigs are left as boars for most of the growing period and they are officially a “barrow” after the second injection. The testes do rescind, but are still present. The product that has been approved is Improvest, which can be obtained only with a prescription through a veterinarian. As listed on the label, pigs must be marketed between 3 and 10 weeks after the second does. After 10 weeks, the production of the steroids and “off odors” starts to increase again as the immunity lessens.

While it is doubtful that the product would be used by 4-H exhibitors this year, in future years it might be more common. One issue is that most packers are not accepting pigs that have gone through this process since it is a new technology, but most are evaluating it currently for future acceptance. Thus some state and county shows are including language this year such as “Barrows must be physical castrates” which is the current method of swine castration. This would prevent Improvest pigs from being shown until the larger swine exhibition industry determine how to best handle these pigs.

Please let us know if you have any more questions about this. Also, below are two good links to learn more about Improvest.

Zoetis website for Improvest:

https://online.zoetis.com/US/EN/Products/Pages/improvest_new.aspx

National hog Farmer Article on Improvest:

<http://nationalhogfarmer.com/marketing/understanding-improvest>

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