

Suggested guidelines for tagging 4-H pigs to limit disease risk

It is required that all pigs are ear tagged prior to exhibition at the Kansas State Fair, Junior Livestock Show and at most county fairs. During the tagging process, exposure to other pigs and equipment, clothing, or boots that have contacted other pigs increases the risk for disease transmission. Any bodily secretions (blood, urine, feces, or mucus) from the pigs can contain infectious disease organisms.

The two most common options for swine tagging are: 1) Bring pigs to a central location or 2) pigs are tagged at individual sites. Disease transmission has been and will continue to be a concern during this tagging process regardless how it is completed. Also, families with breeding swine must be additionally cautious of disease transmission and their pigs should be handled based on their farm biosecurity protocol.

A staggered appointment schedule may be useful to spread out the tagging time and to reduce exposure of pigs and people to each other. Also, this will allow for an increased contact time for disinfection of surfaces such as scales or other equipment.

For further information, please feel free to contact one of the following people:

Dr. Larry Hollis, DVM, Extension Veterinarian
785-532-1246
lhollis@ksu.edu

Dr. Steve Dritz, DVM, Swine Specialist
785-532-4202
Dritz@vet.k-state.edu

Dr. Mike Tokach, Extension Swine Specialist
785-532-2032
mtokach@ksu.edu

Dr. Joel DeRouchey, Extension Livestock Specialist
785-532-2280
jderouch@ksu.edu

Suggested guidelines for a county central location tagging:

- 1) Hold tagging in a location that allows separation distance. Separation should be maintained between vehicles and foot traffic over common ground should be minimized. A hard surfaced parking lot would serve as a good location.
- 2) The best biosecurity measure is NOT removing pigs from the trailer (or other transportation vehicle) for tagging. This practice helps minimize the risk of disease transfer however it will eliminate the chance to weigh the pigs at tagging.
- 3) The person tagging pigs in the trailer should wear double disposable boots and exam gloves when entering the trailer. The outer boots and gloves should be removed as they leave the trailer and disposed of properly. New boots and gloves should be replaced before entering then next trailer. Replace both pairs if the outer pair becomes punctured during the tagging process. Ideally the person entering the trailer to tag should change coveralls (cloth or disposable) between trailers. At minimum if there are visible bodily secretions (blood, urine, feces, mucus) from the pigs on the coveralls or clothes, the coveralls or clothes should be changed before entering another trailer. This will require having several sets of coveralls or clothes available before starting the tagging process.
- 4) If pigs must be weighed, avoid using the same holding pens for multiple groups of pigs and prevent nose-to-nose contact. It would be preferred to unload a trailer of pigs, weigh them and load back onto the trailer before other pigs are unloaded. This will reduce pig to pig contact.
- 5) The individuals tagging and handling pigs on the scale should wear disposable boots and exam gloves. These individuals should change boots and gloves between groups of pigs of different owners from separate locations. If there are visible bodily secretions (blood, urine, feces, mucus) from the pigs on the coveralls or clothes, the coveralls or clothes should be changed before handling the next owners' pigs.
- 6) Clean the scale of manure or other bodily fluids between sets of pigs to prevent transmission of disease. Once all manure and bodily fluids have been removed from the scales, using a hand pump sprayer with disinfectant to spray the contaminated area should be practiced. Disinfectants take time to work. Giving more contact time between groups will increase inactivation of any infectious agents that might be present.
- 7) Taggers should be placed in disinfectant between each use. Multiple taggers should be used to allow individual taggers to have adequate contact time with disinfectants. Taggers should be dried with paper towel after disinfecting.
- 8) 4-H'ers and parents should limit their exposure to trailers, equipment or pigs other than their own. Simple physical contact such as shaking hands with other 4-H'ers and parents may facilitate transfer of disease.

Suggested guidelines for leaders tagging pigs at multiple sites:

- 1) The person tagging should be trained on biosecurity protocols, proper tag placement, and animal husbandry.
- 2) The person tagging should change clothes or coveralls, double disposable boots, disposable exam gloves, etc., after leaving one pig location before entering another location. This will require having several sets of coveralls or clothes available before starting the tagging process.
- 3) No equipment or clothing with visible signs of bodily secretions (blood, urine, feces, mucus) should ever come in contact with pigs on following sites that are visited.
- 4) Tagger should be completely submersed in disinfectant and dried with paper towels after leaving one pig location before being used at the next location. Increased disinfectant contact time will increase their effectiveness.
- 5) No other equipment (including scales, panels, etc.) that is in contact with pigs should be moved from one location to the next.

Effective disinfectants: These include quaternary ammonium compounds (Synergize, Roccal D plus, others), phenols (One Stroke Environ), or peroxymonosulfate (Virkon-S).

Less effective disinfectants: Formols (DC&R), iodines (Weladol, Betadine), chlorhexidine (Nolvasan), and alcohol based disinfectants are significantly less effective.

Disposable exam gloves, boots, and coveralls can often be purchased from local supply stores or veterinarians or can be ordered from supply catalogs, such as Valley Vet Supply (www.valleyvet.com)