A FOLLOW UP STUDY TO SALMONELLA spp. ANTIBODIES IN A PIG UNIT

Martelli Paolo, Terreni Marco, Ghidini Francesca, Cavirani Sandro
Department of Animal Health – University of Parma – Italy

Introduction
Current levels of occurrence of a number of pathogens, including Salmonella, pose potential threats to consumers and, in the longer term, to the viability of the pork processing industry. For example, surveys of retail outlets in Ireland have found pork products to be contaminated with Salmonella (9.9%, [1]). This report is generally in line with data from other countries that confirm the significance of pork as an important source of food-borne pathogens. The inadequacies and cost of conventional culture methods and the convenience of modern serologic techniques have spurred the development of serologic testing for Salmonella in pigs (3). A fundamental characteristic of serological testing is that serum antibody persists much longer than detectable faecal shedding. In Italy, Salmonella spp. infection and correlated diseases are submitted to control measures but a national control program is not present. Due to the relevance of damage related to Salmonella infection, voluntary control programs are in progress at herd level. The study of the antibody patterns to Salmonella within herd population is a useful tool at detecting critical points. The primary objective of this study was to provide baseline data on Salmonella infection involving swine population of an Italian farrow to finish herd.

Material and Methods
Antibody response to Salmonella spp. was detected in 54 pigs by ELISA (IDEXX HerdChek Swine Salmonella test kit) belonging to a farrow to finish 550 sow herd in Italy and experiencing a history of Salmonella choleraesuis infection. Serum samples were collected at 0, 21, 42, 63, 84, 112, 140 and 180 days after birth. In addition, Salmonella antibodies were checked in blood samples of 11 sows at farrowing and in their colostrum.

Results
The data concerning the antibody response to Salmonella spp. detected at different times are shown in Figure 1. At time 0, after colostrum feeding, antibody response involved 98% of suckling piglets. These data are in accordance with seropositivity of sows (100%) and their colostrum samples (90%).

The trend of the seroprevalence showed a gradual decrease and at time 63 days the figure was 14%. This fact leads to the decline of maternal derived antibody (MDA). From 63 to 140 days we observed an increasing decrease to 78%. On clinical basis, no signs of disease referable to Salmonella spp. infection has been recorded during the observation period. In addition, the onset of respiratory disease was detected between 84 to 112 days of age. Laboratory investigations on lung samples did not allowed Salmonella to be isolated. In comparison with the standard productive performances, we have detected a 10% reduction of the average daily weight gain (ADWG).

Discussion
The study involved a typical Italian pig production unit so that it could be considered as a model. On epidemiological criteria, this was a longitudinal serological survey that, on the contrary of a single cross sectional sampling (2), was reliable estimate to monitor the follow up of Salmonella infection in a farrow to finish sow herd. Nevertheless, the lack of Salmonella isolation from faecal samples does not allow seroepidemiological evidences and microbiological findings to be associated. In case of an infected herd, the infection involves 100% of sows as demonstrated by antibody response. So that sucking piglets result seropositive following colostrum feeding. Considering the pathogenesis of Salmonella infection has to be hypothesise a certain degree of faecal shedding from infected-healthy sows to piglets without clinical signs. Due to serological pattern, the time at major risk of Salmonella spp. infection starts from 63 days of age when MDA disappears and pigs are commingled at the beginning of the fattening period that triggers the shedding of the pathogen. On clinical basis, Salmonella infection did not elicit enteric signs but might contribute at the onset of respiratory disease by other pathogens and to cause a reduction of ADWG.

Conclusion
In the Italian production system the common use of wet whey acidifying liquid feed could control the facets of Salmonella infection. However this tool looks not able to control the infection. The use of antibiotic treatment at the beginning of Salmonella spread (about 2 months of age) could be suggested at controlling the infection in fatteners.

References

Figure 1 : Pattern of seroprevalence to Salmonella spp. detected in pigs at different times of observation.