



NEEDLE TEETH

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JUL 10 1974
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The newborn pig has temporary teeth that are replaced by permanent teeth as the pig becomes older.

Some of the temporary teeth are extremely sharp and are known as needle teeth, baby teeth, pin teeth or black teeth. These are replaced in 6 to 12 months by permanent teeth that, in the male, are known as tusks. They are located on both the upper and lower jaws just behind the front or incisor teeth.

BABY TEETH MAY INJURE SOW AND PIGS

Failure to cut needle teeth often results in infection from tooth wounds around the lips and gums and about the area of the needle teeth. In some instances, the infection may spread over the entire face and even affect the eyes, causing blindness. The infection on the face may appear similar to parakeratosis. Pigs will injure themselves as well as inflict facial injuries upon their litter mates.

Injuries in the mouth, lips or skin often result in an infection. If any disease organisms are present in the farrowing pen, conditions are ideal for infections of those pigs or sows having injuries.

If the organisms for erysipelas are present on the premises or farrowing pen, injuries from needle teeth provide an ideal means for spreading this disease throughout the litter.

While playing or seeking their assigned nipple, the baby pigs often injure the skin around the sow's nipples and also injure their litter mates.

Injury to the mammary glands and nipples of the sow leads to mastitis and, in many cases, blind teats. Many potential mastitis-producing organisms are always on the skin of the sow's mammary area and in the bedding. The organisms that readily take advantage of wounds are the Staphylococci, Streptococci and Actinomyces organisms. The latter is very similar to the organisms that cause lumpy jaw in cattle.

BABY TEETH SHOULD BE CLIPPED

Clip baby teeth as soon as possible after the pig is born. Often injuries occur within 24 to 36 hours following birth.

Clip needle teeth with a well sharpened side clipper to prevent breakage and injury to the gum and jaw. Injury from clipping can provide an opening for infection as readily as injuries caused by the needle teeth. Clip the teeth as close to the gum as possible without injuring the gum.

Disinfect the clipper before and between clipping of each baby pig's teeth. A good disinfectant may be any of the quaternary or chlorine disinfectants. Dairy utensil disinfectants and 70 per cent alcohol or lysol are satisfactory (See NDSU Extension Service Circular A-319, "Disinfection").

When clipping the teeth has been completed, wash the clipper in water and dry, as some of the disinfectant will corrode the clipping instrument. Never use iodine on the clipper as it is corrosive to metal.

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TREATMENT OF INJURIES

If injury and infection occur because you have failed to clip the needle teeth of your baby pigs, begin treatment immediately.

First, clip the needle teeth. Then apply good antiseptic to the infected areas.

Any of the following antiseptics are good: metaphen, 2 per cent solution of iodine, zephiran chloride or any one of quaternary ammonium preparations.

A followup application of a medicated ointment is often helpful. Your local veterinarian can provide you with a suitable antiseptic and ointment.

If the sow's mammary glands or nipples have been injured, antiseptic cleansing and the application of an ointment may be helpful.

If infection results, consult your veterinarian immediately, as the loss of a nipple or mammary gland because of infection (mastitis) means that the sow no longer has an adequate food source for the entire litter. Some members of future litters also will be deprived of the important source of food.

The problems of injury to the sow's nipples and mammary glands and infection and possible death to the baby pigs can be avoided by clipping the needle teeth of baby pigs soon after birth.
