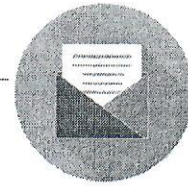


Letters & Notices



**“
I have
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slurry**

VETERINARY MEDICINES

A solution for the zinc oxide ban in pigs?

WITH regard to Josh Loeb's excellent article, 'Multifactorial solution needed for zinc ban' (VR, 9/16 October 2021, vol 189, p 258), there is a very simple solution – do not ban zinc oxide products and remove their marketing authorisations in Great Britain.

As reported in Loeb's article, zinc oxide has been used for the control of postweaning diarrhoea in pigs for over 20 years. From an efficacy point of view, its use 'made an amazing difference to pig health'. Personally, having written two 'expert reports' on the efficacy of zinc oxide, initially to support the UK and Irish registration and then to support its subsequent

defence in the EU, I can agree with this statement. This view was also accepted by the Committee for Veterinary Medicinal Products and European Medicines Agency.

Concerns were expressed by several countries regarding environmental issues and the likelihood of zinc accumulating in soil to potentially toxic levels in the future in some small, pig-intensive countries (like the Netherlands and Denmark), or run off from the soil in sandy soils found in Brittany, France.

In the UK there were no reports of zinc accumulation in the main pig production regions, such as East Anglia; however, in contrast there was evidence of zinc accumulation in some mining and industrial areas such as Cornwall and south Wales.¹

To counter this potential environmental spread of zinc, further strict measures for the spreading of dung and slurry were put onto the revised summary of product characteristics in November 2018.² Treated pig manure had to be mixed with other manure to dilute it and it was advised that pig manure 'should not be spread on the same area of land in successive years to avoid the accumulation of zinc', thus at least halving the potential contamination rate.

Therefore, the main question is has there been an accumulation of zinc in soils that have been treated with this pig manure/slurry, and have the government authorities shown that there is an actual problem? I have not seen evidence of such.

The UK has left the EU and therefore do we need to thoughtlessly just follow its regulations? If there is not a problem in this country, why damage our own pig industry and piglet health and welfare? Will the EU stop trading with us if we decide not to follow the same regulations? I would be surprised if it did, as approximately 50 per cent of our consumption of pig meat and products is imported from the EU, and there are no zinc residue issues in our export pig meat, just political ones.

David Burch, retired specialist in pig medicine
The Round House, The Friary, Old Windsor,
Berkshire SL4 2NR
email: d.burch@octagon-services.co.uk

References

- 1 UKSO. Advanced soil geochemical atlas of England and Wales. <https://bit.ly/3G2Gigs> (accessed 19 October 2021)
- 2 Veterinary Medicines Directorate. Summary of Product Characteristics: PigZin Premix 1000 mg/g Premix for Medicated Feeding Stuff. <https://bit.ly/3aNtmwu> (accessed 19 October 2021)