

## **Restraints for Medicating Swine and Transport of Swine**

Our topics for this week are:

- Pig and hog restraints for administration of medication
- Handling of Asian Pot-Bellied Pigs
- Transporting swine

Most handling and restraint of hogs can be and should be done WITHOUT tranquilization, sedation, hypnosis, or anesthesia. However, some handling and restraint procedures should be restricted to veterinary medical professionals due to the potential danger to the animal or handler. These require special skills, equipment, or facilities, and possibly adjunct chemical restraint or complete immobilization by chemical restraint.

### **Whole Body Restraint**

#### **Rope Harness**

Medium-sized hogs can be restrained and tied by a lariat loop around the neck and a half hitch around the chest. The loop is dropped over the head and pulled up around the neck. A half hitch loop is formed and held with the bottom of the loop on the floor in front of the hog which encourages to step forward. When it steps through the loop, it is pulled up around the chest behind its elbows. The hog's ease of movement has to be restricted while the half hitch is quickly applied or they will slip out of the neck loop before the harness is completed.

#### **V-Troughs**

V-shaped troughs can be used to restrain pigs less than 50 lb. on their backs for blood samples from the cranial vena cava. V-troughs can be tilted head down or head up depending on the needs of the procedure being performed.

#### **Canvas Slings**

Slings with holes for each leg and an access to the neck hole can be used for collecting blood from hogs less than 50 lb. This is less stressful, more comfortable for the hog, and provides better restraint than V troughs, but it is not as flexible in holding a variety of sizes of pigs as the V trough.

#### **Lateral Restraint and Casting Methods**

Placing a small pig under 50 lb. in lateral recumbency can be done, as with dogs, by reaching over its torso and grasping the front and hind leg on the side nearest the handler's body, picking it up and gently sliding it down the handler's body and onto its side.

For larger pigs up to 80 lb. the same technique can be used by first snubbing the pig by its snout and tying it low to a post. A short rope with loops on each end is used. The loops are placed below the dewclaws on a front and hind leg on the same side. The handler stands on the side with the tied legs, and the mid part of the rope is pulled under the hog and upward causing

the hog to lie on its side. The handler continues to hold the rope and places a knee just behind the hogs shoulder to maintain the restraint. Laying pigs in lateral restraint should be smooth and allow the animal to slide down the handler's body or legs into lateral recumbency.

For hogs more than 100 lb., a hock hobble can be used to lay a hog in lateral recumbency. A hock hobble is a snubbing rope applied around the upper jaw and then the standing end is run to a hind leg where a loop is applied above the hock. The snout is then pulled toward the hind leg forcing the hog to lie on its side.

Large hogs, more than 300 lb., can be laid on their side using half-hitches around the trunk of their body in the same manner as using half-hitches to cast cattle. The hog is caught with a snout snare and using a rope at least 15 ft long a loop is placed around the neck and tied with a bowline knot. The standing end of the rope is then placed around the chest and flank with a couple of half-hitches. Steady pulling on the end of the rope will cause the hog to lie down on its side.

### **Restraint of the Head**

Restrain of the head with the use of halters or stanchions is not possible with swine. Hog snares or snubbing ropes restrain the head as much as is possible without chemical restraint.

### **Asian Pot-Bellied Pigs**

Asian (miniature) pot-bellied pigs are pigs from Vietnam with fat rolls over their eyes, a pot-belly, and sway back that became a fad pet in the United States during the 1980's. Although less popular now, they are still occasionally kept as pets and not treated like livestock. Handling and restraint is more like the techniques used for dogs than for swine raised for meat production. Support slings can be useful in physical restraint of pet pigs.

Dogs and pot-bellied pigs in the same household can cause problems because of competition for food and toys. Pigs are uneasy about being picked up. They will struggle and can easily be dropped and injured.

In moderate climates they may be housed outdoors or indoors. However, they are very sensitive to heat and cold weather. The preferred temperature range is 65 to 75F. Outdoor housing should provide at least 50 square feet for each pig. Hay or straw should be provided for rooting and chewing. A shelter (3-sided shed or large dog house) from severe weather and sunlight should be provided. The pen and enclosure should be movable and relocated as soon as the pen's dirt has been rooted throughout the pen. If the pig is housed on concrete, the pen should be cleaned daily and fresh hay or straw added 3 to 4 times per week.

Pot-bellied pigs need to have regular hoof trims about every 6 months if confined in pens with dirt and no abrasive surfaces (rocks, concrete, etc.). Males should be castrated at 2 to 3 months of age. Sexually intact males (boars) more than 2 years of age can be more than 100 lb., aggressive, and dangerous. Permanent canine teeth (tusks) should be trimmed at 1 year of age and annually thereafter. This requires chemical restraint.

### **Injections**

#### **Intramuscular**

Intramuscular injections are given in the side of the neck, 2 to 3 inches behind and below the ear. Due to the lack of muscle elsewhere, piglets are given IM injections in the semitendinosus and

semimembranosus of the hindleg.

### **Subcutaneous**

Pigs are given subcutaneous injections under the loose skin of the axilla behind a front leg or the flank fold. Hogs are injected at the base of the ear.

### **Administration of Oral Medications**

Oral administration of medications to swine is done by addition to their feed. Although oral examinations can be performed with a hand paddle oral speculum, this is not practical for repeated administration of oral medications. Piglets or small pet pigs may be able to be medicated by holding vertical, head up, while an assistant administers liquid medication with an oral syringe.

## **TRANSPORTING SWINE**

Swine should be loaded on a level surface (a loading platform) rather than up a ramp into a transport vehicle, when possible. If it must use a loading ramp, it should be less than 30 degrees with cleats. Loading chutes for hogs should be solid walled on the outside to prevent seeing handlers, 22 to 30 inches wide divisions to prevent hogs from being able to turn around in the chute and a handler walking behind them. Center partitions in the chute should be see-through to see other hogs moving forward. At least 2 inch thick cleats are needed in floor to eliminate or reduce slipping. The ramp should be covered with bedding used in transport vehicle. Cleats on ramps for adult pigs should be 8 inches apart and closer for smaller pigs. Small groups (3 to 6 pigs) should be loaded at a time. Swine will move up solid ramps better than slatted ramps with gaps.

Transport vehicle partitions should be used to pen up to 20 to 25 hogs together. Mature hogs from different groups should not be mixed together due to fighting that will result. Mature boars should be penned individually. In hot weather, transported swine should be in a covered vehicle, bedded with moist sand, have openings in the trailer sides for ventilation, and hauled in the coolest part of day. Extra space for each hog should be allowed and the vents adjusted to promote ventilation during travel. In cold weather, the top and most side openings should be closed and straw or wood shavings bedding should be provided. The transport vehicle should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- 1. Pigs and hogs can be cast on their side and restrained with the aid of ropes.**
- 2. Other than in piglets, intramuscular injections are given in the side of the neck near an ear in pigs and hogs.**
- 3. Oral medications can easily be administered to swine by mixing the medication in food.**
- 4. When transporting swine, special attention must be given in hot (above 75°F) or cold weather (below 50°F).**

More information on animal handling is available in my book, Animal Handling and Physical

Restraint, published by CRC Press. It is also available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is available at: [www.betteranimalhandling.com](http://www.betteranimalhandling.com)

Don't forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.