Did this cause this? [sarcoptic mange of pigs]

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The mite on the left was detected by using a microscope with a magnification of 100 times to examine a skin scraping taken from the above pig. This confirmed the suspicion that sarcoptic mange mites were the cause of the skin lesions.

History
The owner commented that since purchasing six baconer gilts at a local sale, rubbing had increased in all pigs on the property. This was evident from the trees in the sow paddock, which had been virtually ring barked. He had sprayed sump oil on the backs of all sows, but this hadn’t improved matters.

When the itching and rubbing was noticed in this litter the farmer blamed the straw bedding in the farrowing pen. He replaced it with sawdust but when the rubbing continued he sought advice.

Investigation
The visiting veterinarian found one piglet in a litter of ten severely affected (as shown in the picture). Other piglets in the litter had numerous raised lumps mainly along the belly and around the head. Their mother appeared to have plenty of milk and creep feed was available, but the piglets were not good “doers” and they seemed to spend a lot of time rubbing themselves.

The history and symptoms indicated that mange mites were the most likely cause of the trouble so the veterinarian took a skin scraping which was examined under a microscope and revealed the presence of sarcoptic mange mites.

Cause
The sarcoptic mange mites had been brought on to the farm by the six baconers purchased at the local sale. These pigs appeared to be all right when purchased...
but the small mange mites must have been buried in the skin. Once on the new property they had increased in number and spread unnoticed to the owner's own sows, causing minor skin lesions, irritation and rubbing. The oil had had little effect on the spread, and when this particular sow had farrowed, mange mites soon made their way on to the piglets where they rapidly increased in number. After their favourite sites of attack, the skin along the belly and around the head, had become crowded they spread all over the body causing unusually severe lesions.

**Action**

The farmer was advised to purchase enough of an organic phosphate insecticide to treat all pigs, as trials using an 0.25 per cent concentration of this insecticide had shown it to be very effective. The farmer's son mentioned that they had a tin of insecticide left over after jetting the sheep against blowfly strike. A search of the "medicine cabinet" was made and a tin of diazinon, an organic phosphate insecticide was found. A look at the directions revealed that an 0.25 per cent solution would be 10 times stronger than that recommended for sheep lice.

The required solution was made up and the piglets dipped in it. The sows were all crushed in a small yard and thoroughly sprayed from above and below, using a knapsack spray. The pig houses were also sprayed as the owner had been warned that mites could live away from the pig for up to 14 days.

Two weeks later the treatment was repeated to kill any new mites which might have hatched out.

**Results**

The sows and litters soon stopped rubbing and the skin lesions disappeared.

To avoid another possible build-up of mange bite, the farmer will spray each sow before farrowing. Any pigs which he purchases in future will certainly be sprayed twice before being placed in the main piggery.

— F. C. WILKINSON, Veterinary Surgeon

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