

Hernia

There are three types of hernias. Umbilical, Scrotal and Inguinal. For now there doesn't seem to be one particular cause for them, but more likely a combination of genetic and environmental factors. There's been many genetic tests in countries around the world and it doesn't seem to affect any particular breed or set of genetics more than others. Currently the belief is that they randomly occur when situations are "just right".

Umbilical hernias are more commonly seen than the other two types. They occur when the abdominal wall fails to heal properly after birth. This break or separation in muscle tissue allows the intestines to protrude thru the weakened muscle. Treatment such as iodine dipping or spraying or clipping the cord does not prevent hernias and may actually increase incidence if the cord is not handled properly. Umbilical hernias appear more in males but do show up in females. What is currently known to be causes are:

- Possible genetic defectbut cannot be confirmed at this time.
- Environmental connection such as bacterial infection. The most common bacteria found on umbilical stumps are: E Coli, Staphylococcus, and Enterococcus but there are many more.
- Abnormal stretching of umbilical cord during farrowing.

The abdominal muscles are still fragile so you may notice the following hernia causes as well.

- Piglets also huddle together and sometimes weight and pressure from those on top will create a hernia to those on the bottom.
- Occasionally hernias will develop from wrestling or blows to the abdominal area from playing.

Scrotal hernias occur in males and are thought to be caused by the internal inguinal ring not closing properly allowing the intestines to drop into the scrotum. Scrotal hernias more commonly occur on the left side but can be both sides. Surgical treatment is often successful if performed early.

Inguinal hernias occur primarily in males but do appear in females. The cause is thought to be the same as for Umbilical hernias with a weakened or unclosed muscle allowing the intestines to spill through or protrude. Treatment would be the same as with Umbilical hernias.

Other physical anomalies you may see that can be associated with hernias.

Intersexuality or intersexes in females appears to be genetically carried by boars and can present themselves in various degrees. Often but not always, an inguinal or scrotal hernia will be noticed in which the testes are captured within the body however there is no scrotum or the testes cannot drop into the scrotum. The hog may have the appearance of a gilt and may have fallopian tubes and uterus' in different stages of development. The hog may even cycle and become bred however they rarely carry to term. The hog may also present with boar-like traits while maturing since the testes are present and producing male hormones.

Processing is recommended prior to maturity due to the possibility of boar taint. Intersexuality is rare but it does happen.

Cryptorchidism is when one or both testes fail to descend into the scrotum. Sometimes one or both may drop at a later date but not always. The breeder must know that the boar can be fertile for reproduction once mature and can also produce boar taint when processing. Cryptorchidism is rare but not as rare as intersexuality.

In most cases surgery for repair can be successful but veterinary services are expensive. There are always exceptions but it's recommended to watch and allow the piglet to mature to processing weight unless it develops complications such as off feed, bloating, illness, temperature, lethargic or in pain. It is not wise to breed hogs with hernias due the possibility of genetic influence. A gilt with a hernia may develop serious complications or even death due to the weight of the litter, competition for space in the abdominal cavity, and/or contractions from farrowing.

All hernias occur due to a weak spot or defect in muscle. The weak muscle may have both genetic and environmental influences or causes.

Hernias usually don't affect the hog other than being unsightly. It's recommended to watch the hog for signs of illness or pain. In this case the intestines could become blocked or twisted and immediate action is necessary, usually meaning to put the hog down. In the majority of cases even with exceptionally large hernias the hog lives to butcher weight without incident. Your work toward prevention should include keeping good records of your sows, boars and litters and documenting any health concerns to notice patterns for the future. Keep bedding and farrowing areas as fresh and clean as possible to help prevent umbilical infection and hernia --and by not assisting in the farrowing process unless the sow or piglets are in danger. 1.) Your being there may create unnecessary stress to your sow. 2.) Millions of healthy piglets have been born without introducing medications, pulling piglets, iodine or umbilical clips. The umbilical cord normally breaks during or right after birth but any pulling, lifting or handling to remove the piglet to dry off, check over, or place on a teat may put stress on the umbilical area or a still attached cord. Self- movement of the piglet from birth to a teat is helpful in expanding the lungs and use of muscles. The umbilical area usually heals within an average of 18 days.

Like many other health or medical situations in the swine world, STUFF HAPPENS. There has to be reasons but for now some are unknown. Probably sometime in your journey with hogs you will experience a hernia or even a few, and other unexplainable things as well. To be a good steward every breeder should be pro-active. Know your hogs. They're all different and it's much easier to be alerted to problems if you know them and their behaviors. Keep living and sleeping areas as fresh and clean as possible to avoid bacterial and viral infections as well as parasitic critters that can carry disease. Good biosecurity is a must at all times.



Congenital Umbilical Hernias result from incomplete closure of abdominal wall @ the umbilicus. More common in pigs, surgically corrected

Umbilical hernia, always present themselves at the umbilical stump. They can be of various sizes.

Most all hernias can be surgically repaired. The breeder must weigh the cost of treatment against the overall gain. Most hogs with hernias can reach processing size or age without incident.



Scrotal Hernia, The hernia may be smaller, or more pronounced but is always in the scrotum. Castration may be dangerous due to intestines protruding into the scrotum. The procedure is best done in your vet's office and can be successful. Most breeders grow them out and process scrotum hernia boars before they reach breeding age to avoid the possibility of boar taint.



Inguinal Hernia, may present themselves anywhere in the belly area from the naval down and may be of smaller or larger sizes. Most hogs will present with one hernia but it's not unheard of to have two.