



WHEN DOES IT PAY TO ELIMINATE PRRS FROM MY HERD?

This is the question that Dr. Derald Holtkamp and colleagues at Iowa State University attempted to answer in a paper funded by the National Pork Board and presented at the recent American Association of Swine Veterinarians meeting in Denver. The short answer depends on how long before the herd gets re-infected with PRRS virus.

In most swine breeding herds today, becoming infected with PRRS virus is not a matter of *if*, but *when*. The high incidence of re-infection has caused many producers to throw up their hands in frustration and ask, “Why bother to eliminate?” The objective of this study was to conduct an economic analysis of PRRS virus elimination from a breeding herd and compare the difference between “control” and “elimination” scenarios. Holtkamp evaluated the “discounted payback period,” that is the time a herd needs to remain PRRS virus-free to break even on the cost of elimination.

The estimated payback period depended on the cost of eliminating the virus from a breeding herd, how frequently the herd weaned negative pigs, how often the pigs stayed negative to market, and the PRRS status of the herd at the time elimination was initiated. A range of cost of elimination was assigned to the two most common approaches to eliminating PRRS virus from a herd: herd closure and rollover (HCR) and complete depopulation and repopulation (CDR).

COST OF ELIMINATION IN \$/BREEDING FEMALE

Method	Cost	Payback Period (Months)
HCR		
CDR		

The study found that when herd closure and rollover was used to eliminate PRRS virus from a breeding herd, the payback period ranged from 4 to 26 months. When complete depopulation and repopulation was used, the payback period ranged from 18 to 83 months.

This study encourages producers to consider PRRS virus elimination using herd closure and rollover. The frequency of re-breaks can be reduced by improving biosecurity, by cooperating in regional control and elimination programs, and by increasing our understanding of the virus.

Holtkamp concluded by reminding us that “Re-breaks, following elimination, are demoralizing but they are only a ‘failure’ if they occur before a payoff is achieved.”

A copy of the full report can be found at
<http://www.ans.iastate.edu/report/air/2012pdf/R2678.pdf>