Injecting a Pig

Before injecting a pig make sure you know the weight of animal (Kg) to be treated and the dose rate of the medicine (ml/Kg) in order to calculate the correct volume (mls) to give.

Ensure treated animals are identified (e.g. spray marker) and medicines used are recorded in the medicine book. Always follow treatment guidelines for treatment duration and intervals; this can be found either on the bottle or as directed by your vet. Incorrect dosing and/or technique can cause a number of problems: the pig does not get cured, antibiotics can develop resistance issues and become ineffective in the future, withdrawal period problems or we can run into toxicity problems. Correct dosing and technique are of paramount importance. Any doubts please ask your vet.

**Needle Size** – what needle length and gauge to use on the different age groups of pig:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Kg</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Needle Length</th>
<th>Gauge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 7</td>
<td>Piglet</td>
<td>5/8&quot;</td>
<td>21g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 25</td>
<td>Weaner</td>
<td>5/8&quot;</td>
<td>21g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 60</td>
<td>Grower</td>
<td>1/2&quot;</td>
<td>19g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 100</td>
<td>Finisher</td>
<td>1/2&quot;</td>
<td>19g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100Kg +</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>1&quot;</td>
<td>18g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intramuscular injections**

Injections should be performed in the neck as indicated in the picture left. The site to aim for is close behind the base of the ear, as at this site the fat coverage is not too great.

Intramuscular injections are given perpendicular to the pig – i.e. the needle is at 90 degrees to the pig’s skin. Correct needle length is important and correct site is important in order to deliver the medicine into the muscle. Injection into fat alters the medicine’s behaviour and efficacy.

Piglets are the only category of pig whereby injecting into the back of the hindlimb (as shown in the picture left) is acceptable. It is vitally important piglets are restrained properly to prevent nerve damage/trauma to the leg.

As with older pigs, the ideal injection site for piglets is in the neck – ensure the correct needle length is used to prevent trauma to the piglet as their necks are less well protected by fat and muscle layers.
Subcutaneous injection technique

As before - injections should be performed in the neck as indicated in the picture left. The site to aim for is close behind the base of the ear, as at this site the fat coverage is not too great.

This time the needle needs to be pushed in 45 degrees to the pig’s skin – the needle is directed in at a shallower angle so the bevel end enters the tissues just under the skin layer. The other hand can be used to pull the skin up to assist with correct injection siting BUT care must be taken to avoid accidental self injection. Injecting at the correct angle with correct needle length should be satisfactory enough without having to pull the skin up.

Restraint

Correct restraint is vital to allow for correct injection technique. Equally if the needle does break into the pig, with good restraint you have more chance of retrieving it. Injections in unrestrained pigs run a high risk of needle retention and poor technique. Grower pigs and older should be restrained using a snare (picture right).

Piglets restrained by the back leg MUST have their hocks supported (picture left). The operators hand must support the piglet up into the groin area. Nerve, muscle and joint damage can result as a poor restraint technique which will affect performance.

The best way to restrain piglets is to hold them under their chest and into your body as shown in the picture right.

Pictures courtesy of BPEX