Experimental Infection of Young Pigs with an Early European Strain of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea Virus and a Recent US Strain

Outbreaks of porcine epidemic diarrhoea (PED) were reported across Europe during the 1980s and 1990s, but only sporadic outbreaks occurred in recent years. PED virus (PEDV) spread for the first time into the USA in 2013 and has caused severe economic losses. Retrospectively, it was found that two different strains of PEDV have been introduced into the United States, both are closely related to strains circulating in China where a new wave of the disease occurred from 2010 onwards. Since autumn 2014, new outbreaks of PED have occurred in Europe. In this study, weaned piglets were inoculated with an early European isolate (Br1/87) or faecal/intestinal suspensions derived from pigs infected with a recent European strain of PEDV (from Germany) or a US strain of PEDV. No evidence for infection resulted from inoculation of pigs with the German sample that contained high levels of PEDV RNA; there were no clinical signs, excretion of viral RNA or anti-PEDV antibody production. In contrast, all the pigs in the other two groups showed evidence of infection. Mild clinical signs of disease, mainly diarrhoea, occurred in piglets inoculated with the Br1/87 and US PEDV strains. PEDV RNA was detected throughout the intestine in euthanized animals at 4 days post-inoculation. In addition, within these animals, low levels of viral RNA were detected in lungs and livers with higher levels in spleens. Serocconversion against PEDV occurred in all surviving infected animals within 10 days. PEDV RNA excretion occurred for at least 2 weeks. The US PEDV RNA was detected at low levels in serum samples on multiple days. It is apparent that current diagnostic systems can detect infection by the different virus strains.