

Animal welfare in Danish pig herds

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It is reasonable to assume that animal welfare varies not only between herds but also between different ages of an animal. The objective of the study was to use an animal welfare assessment protocol to identify areas of animal welfare concern in Danish pigs of different ages. This study involved visiting Danish pig farms and assessing the welfare of piglets, (n=57), farrowing sows, (n=57), sows and gilts (n=57), and weaners/fatteners (n=57), using a newly developed animal welfare assessment protocol. The protocol used had many of the same measures as Welfare Quality[®], and covered 8 of the 12 Welfare Quality[®] criteria for piglets, 9 for farrowing sows, 9 for weaners/fatteners and 8 for sows and gilts. The welfare outcome of the score for each measure was weighted by the average score given by scientists (n=6), consultants (n=4) and official veterinarians (n=16) working with animal welfare. The possible scores ranged from 0 (poor welfare) to 100 (perfect welfare). The overall welfare pertaining to that measure was then calculated as the prevalence of the scores included. For piglets, the routines around tail docking and castration were the major welfare concerns (use of pain killers or not; welfare scores = 30 ± 9 and 37 ± 3 ; mean \pm SD). For farrowing sows, it was the farrowing space and system (28 ± 15 and 34 ± 0), as well as the ability to perform nestbuilding behaviour (36 ± 25). For sows and gilts, the major concern was the time spent crated in the insemination unit (37 ± 16). For weaners and fatteners it was the levels of mortality (37 ± 12), the floor type in the hospital pens (37 ± 16), floorage in the resting area (38 ± 14) and access to water (39 ± 19). Although the farms were not a random sample, the results can be used to identify issues that are likely to represent major animal welfare concerns in the Danish pig sector.