



Reducing sexual behaviour and aggression in male pigs

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Introduction

The Dutch pig sector moves towards non castration in male piglets. This does not only require a solution to reduce and identify boar taint but also one to reduce typical “male behaviour” like mounting and aggression causing a threat to both animal welfare and performance. The objective was to reduce sexual behaviour and aggression in male pigs by management measures.

Material & Methods

Three experiments were conducted, two in enriched pens with 1,6-1,9 m²/pig and one in conventional pens with 1.0 m²/pig. In the first experiment the effect of straw versus rubber mat in the lying area, and 3 versus 6 eating places was tested in 12 pens with 18 males or castrates.

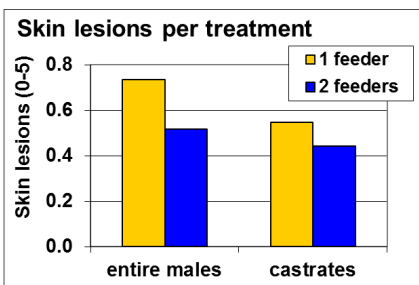
In the second experiment the effect of additional Sugar Beet Pellets (SBP) and a dummy sow to mount was tested in 8 pens with 15 males.

In the third experiment the effect of litters versus single sex groups and sequential (1 feeder) versus simultaneous feeding (3 times/day) was tested in 48 pens with 12 pigs.

In all experiments skin lesions (score 0-5), lameness (score 0-2) and mounting behaviour (mounting (attempts) per pen per snapshot) were measured and analysed using REML in Genstat.

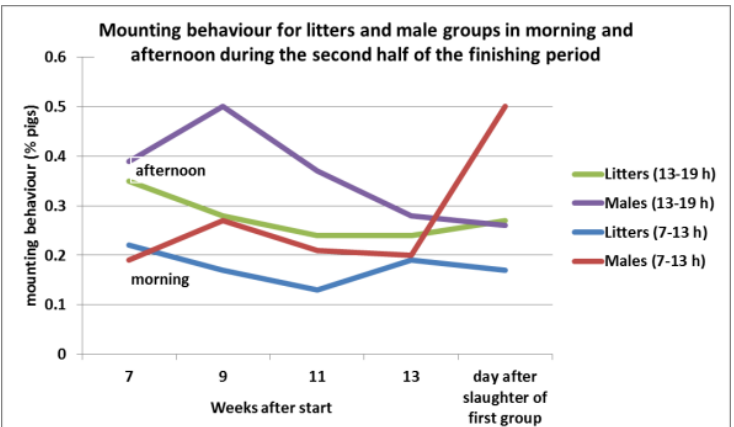
Results

1) Males showed more skin lesions (0.64 vs 0.48; $p=0.059$) and mounting behaviour (0.29 vs 0.12; $p<0.007$) than castrates, but no difference in lameness (0.41 vs 0.30; $p=0.27$). The additional feeder tended to reduce skin lesions (1.88-1.48; $p=0.098$). Straw and an additional feeder did not reduce mounting behaviour and an additional feeder did not reduce lameness (0.40-0.31; $p=0.47$) but tended to reduce skin lesions (1.88-1.48; $p=0.098$).



2) SBP did not reduce lesions, lameness and mounting behaviour. The dummy resulted in less lameness (0.23 vs 0.32; $p=0.018$) and did not reduce skin lesions (0.73 vs 0.81; $p=0.597$), however it didn't effect mounting behaviour.

3) More mounting behaviour was observed in pens with only males than in mixed sex pens ($p=0.02$), but when only analysing the males there was no difference. No effect of feeding system on mounting was observed ($p = 0.42$). Males had more lameness ($p=0.04$) and skin lesions on the front body than females ($p = 0.004$). We found no effect of group composition (males and mixed sex) and feeding system on skin lesions.



Conclusions

It can be concluded that mounting behaviour is not reduced by the tested measures. Extra feeders reduced skin lesion in male pens. The dummy sow reduced lameness but served more as a hide than as a mounting device. Mixed sex groups spread males and mounting behaviour over more pens. A substantial reduction of male pig behaviour must probably be found in a combination of measures. The project continues with experiments on light schedules and light color, group size and hiding side walls under conventional and organic conditions.



Young male pigs around the “dummy sow”



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