



The 21st International Society for Animal Hygiene Conference

One Health in Action – Innovations in Health,
Welfare and Environment
for a Sustainable Animal Production

Conference Proceedings

18-20 September 2024

Chiang Mai, Thailand

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Assessing Animal Welfare within Estonian Swine Farms

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ABSTRACT

A pilot study was conducted to assess the animal welfare conditions in pig farms. In 2023, a total of 20 farrow-to-finish pigsties participated in the survey. 70% of farms housed pigs in a single unit, and 65% produced feed locally. All farms had quarantine units, and 95% had separate areas for sick pigs. All farms employed veterinarians, but the frequency of visits varied. The average number of piglets born alive was 14.3 ± 1.1 , and piglet mortality at weaning was 13.1%. Estimated mortality rates were 2.3% for weaners, 1.6% for fatteners and 2.8% for sows. Most respondents rated the rearing conditions on their farm as “satisfactory” (4) – sows 75.0%, piglets 57.9%, weaners 68.4%, and fatteners 64.7%. Ratings of “excellent” ranged from 15.0% to 17.6%. The lowest rating, “bad,” was given for the condition of piglets (5.3%). Overall, welfare conditions on the farms were judged as excellent (15%), good (37%), or good-satisfactory (25%). Tail docking was practiced in 70% of farms, while all implemented pre-trial strategies for tail biting detection. The most frequently cited triggers for tail biting were changes in temperature (29.5%), ventilation (20.5%), and diet (20.5%). A wide variety of materials were used for pig manipulation activities, including chains (20.6%), balls (14.7%), and wooden materials (10.3%), among others. Veterinary treatment cases for sows were mainly below 10%, though somewhat more attention was required for cases of metritis and arthritis. Piglets, weaners, and fatteners suffered more from traumas, intestinal inflammation, respiratory diseases, and arthritis. The most used antibiotics for treatment were amoxicillin and oxytetracycline. Piglets were primarily vaccinated against circovirus and mycoplasma pneumonia, while sows were vaccinated against parvovirus, erysipelas, colibacillosis, clostridial disease, leptospirosis, and circovirus. This survey served as a pilot study to develop a pig herd health and welfare protocol for Estonian pig farms.

Keywords: welfare, health, pig, farrow-to-finish

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