

Behavioural observations of piglets in an organic free farrowing pen

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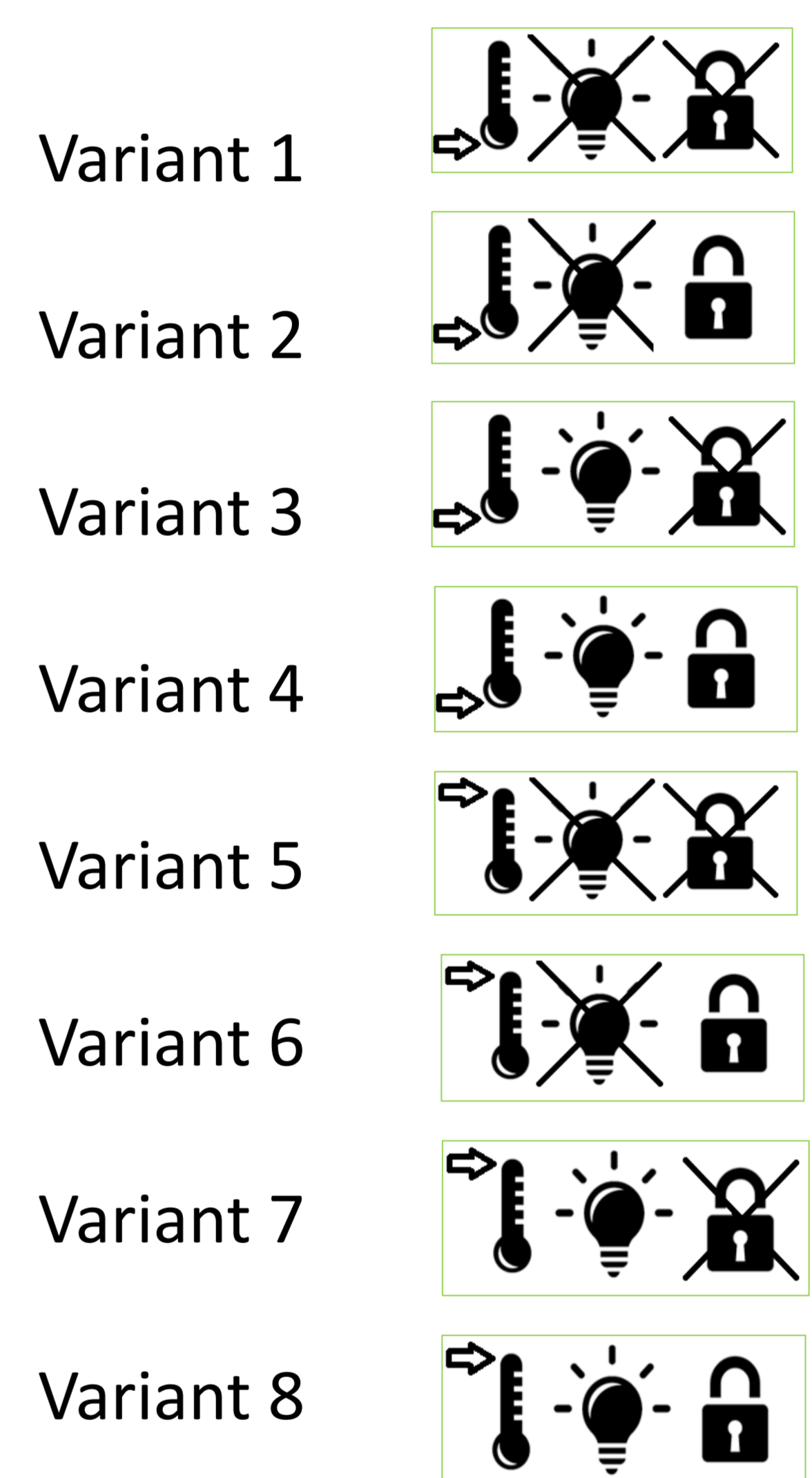
Background

Animal-friendly free farrowing can be associated with a higher risk of piglet losses, which mostly occur within the first days of life and often due to crushing by the sow and hypothermia. In the heated piglet nest, the piglets are protected from these hazards. Therefore we hypothesize that early and frequent nest use can increase piglet survival. To identify conditions which attract the piglets to the nest, different piglet nest designs and management strategies were compared.



Animals, Material and Methods

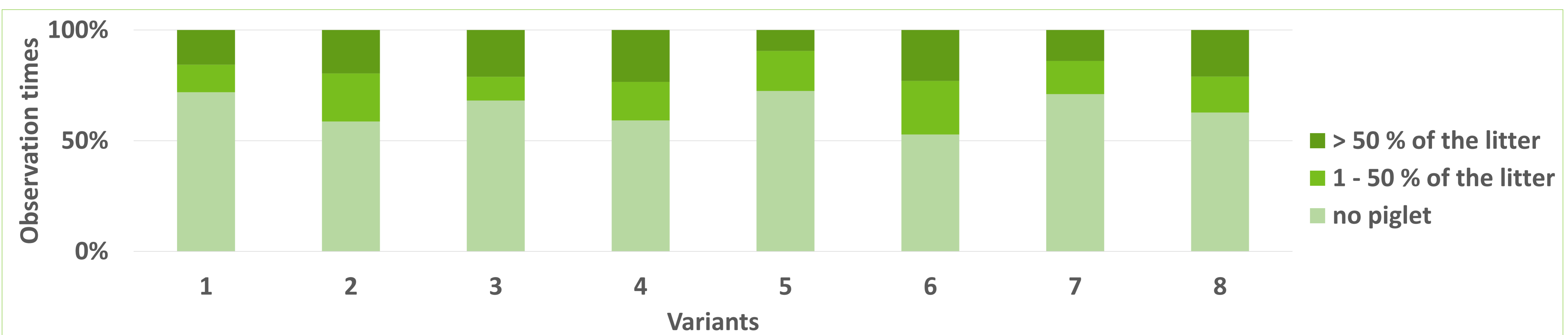
- May 2018 – December 2020 on the experimental farm of Thünen Institute
- Large White x Landrace sows, inseminated with Piétrain
- Data from 1863 piglets out of 129 litters in individual farrowing pens
- 8 combinations of treatments:
 - electric lid heating vs. underfloor heating
 - with vs. without LED-light
 - with vs. without confinement of the piglets in the nest during the first four feeding times of the sow after farrowing
- Video analysis: 72h after farrowing, location and behaviour of the piglets
- Scan sampling method, 10 minutes interval (BORIS)



Results



- Nest use increased from the first to the third day after birth.
- Variants with confinement led to slightly less observation times with no piglet in the nest than variants without confinement. The different nest designs do not yet reveal a clear effect.



→ Piglets of the variants with confinement seemed to use the nest better.