

Preliminary experiences on organic farrowing pen size

Herman Vermeer
Wageningen Livestock Research
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Background

- Newborn piglet mortality in organic herds is often higher than in conventional herds. The legal minimum of 7.5m² indoor pen surface is considered a real minimum and separation of functional areas is better with 8m² or more.
- In cooperation with organic pig farmers we started a comparison of standard and large farrowing pens

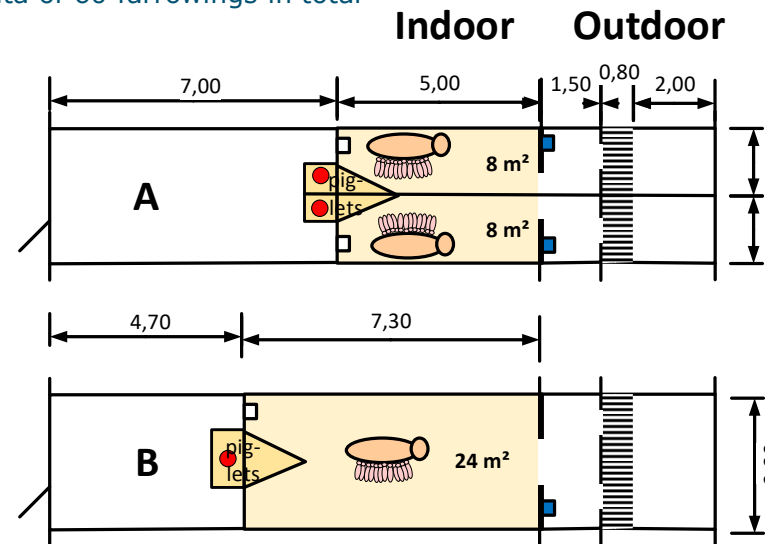


Objective

The aim of the project is to stimulate natural behaviour (nest construction / maternal behaviour) of the sow and survival of the newborn piglets by offering a larger indoor space in the farrowing pen.

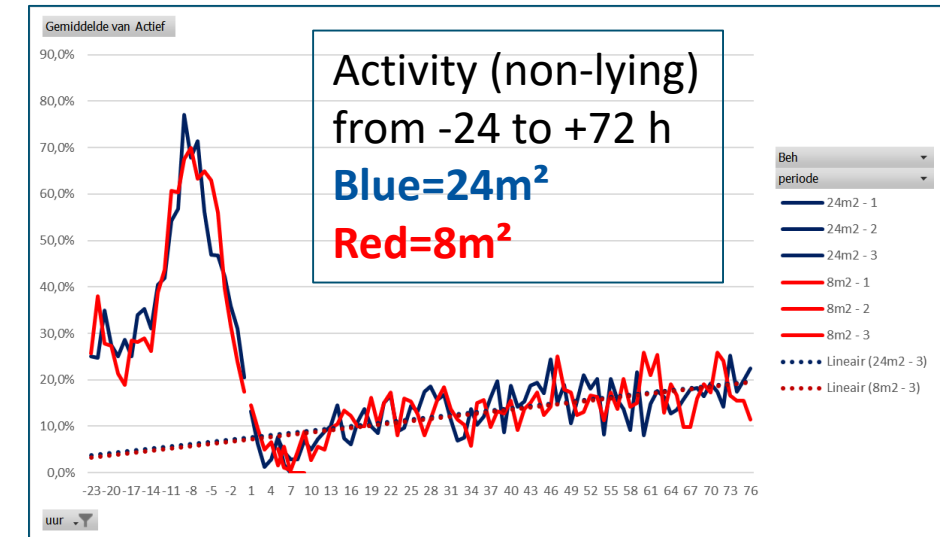
Materials / methods

- Small commercial farm
- Pens of 8 m² (A) and 24 m² (B) and an additional outdoor run
- Behaviour (video 24 pre - 72 h post farrow) and performance
- Data of 60 farrowings in total



Preliminary results

- No difference in activity (graph) and postural changes
- No difference in newborn mortality
- Piglets later in piglet nest in 24m²
- More sows nest building in 24m²
- No difference in farrowing duration (3.5h)



- Only one third of the sows performed clear nest building
- Distance from piglet nest in 24m² is a disadvantage
- Management skills play an important role
- More indoor pen fouling in 24m² pens
- Climatic conditions not yet clear

Preliminary conclusion

No advantage of large organic pens was found regarding nest building behaviour, maternal behaviour or performance.

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