

WEL-PP-27

WEL - Animal Welfare and Ethology

THE WELFARE OF PIGS IN DIFFERENT REARING SYSTEMS: THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT ON PIG WELFARE

E. Nadlucnik¹, I. Golinar Oven¹, J. Plut¹, T. Steferl¹, M. Stukelj¹

¹*Clinic for Reproduction and Large Animals, Clinic for Ruminants and Pigs, Veterinary faculty, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

Background and Objectives

Pigs are highly motivated to exhibit natural behaviours such as rooting, exploring environment and nest building. Environment in intensive indoor pig farming is generally poor, pigs may develop stereotypic and other adverse behavioural patterns, which indicate poor welfare. The aim of this study is to investigate whether by using enrichment materials and increasing floor space, we can achieve the welfare of pigs kept indoors comparable to the pigs, reared outdoors.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted on an indigenous Slovenian breed: the Krškopolje pig. Sixty adult pigs were used in the study (N = 60), divided into three groups of twenty pigs. The first group (A) was bred indoors, pigs were kept in a large pen (100 m²) with straw bedding. The stocking density was 5 m² per pig and thus exceeded the European standards of at least 1.00 m² per pig weighing more than 110 kg (2001/88/EC). The second (B) and third (C) groups were reared in outdoor systems, led by different farmers. We examined all groups over the four seasons. Using a survey, we assessed various aspects of animal welfare: (1) animal behaviour, (2) health status, (3) living conditions and, for the indoor group, (4) environmental conditions.

Results

The preliminary results show that the welfare of the pigs was high in all groups. The aspects (2) health status and (3) living conditions of the group A were similar to the group B and higher than group C, as the farmer used different farming equipment – e.g., water was provided in large water tanks, shelter had no bedding. Surprisingly, the biggest anomaly was found in the outdoor pigs, as they all got severe sunburns during the summer months, despite having the possibility to retreat from sunlight.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our study demonstrates that by using straw and increasing floor space, we can improve the welfare of pigs to the extent that it is comparable to the welfare of pigs in outdoor breeding systems and may even exceed it.