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WEANED PIGLETS: 14-DAYS ALGAE TREATMENT IMPROVES HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF ANIMAL DURING THE POSTWEANING PERIOD

M. Verdu¹, M. Llordella¹, M. Sabaté², T. Hechavarria².

¹bonÀrea Agrupa, Guissona, Spain; ² Andres Pintaluba, S.A, Reus, Spain.

Introduction

In pigs, digestive disorders associated with weaning lead to antibiotic use to maintain intestinal health. Algae have been studied for their beneficial effects on health, specifically on GIT. The aim was to assess the effects of algae on performance and health status in pigs during the postweaning period at a pilot experimental farm.

Materials and methods

A total of 288 weaned piglets (7.2 ± 0.41 kg BW) were housed in 24 pens of 6 animals (males and females) in a replicated complete randomized design. Each pen was randomly allocated to 1 to 3 dietary treatments during first 2 weeks after weaning. Treatments were: nonmedicated (NM), feed medicated with 0.69% antibiotics (AB), and feed with 0.2% algae (MA). All diets were isonutritive. Trial duration was 42 days of postweaning. Health status was registered daily; feed intake and BW were recorded at days 0, 14 and 42 of postweaning period.

Results

No differences ($P > 0.10$) among treatments were observed on health status (mortality and proportion of applied veterinarian treatments). Pigs fed MA tended ($P = 0.05$) to exhibited a greater FCR compared with NM and AB (0.72 vs 0.68 ± 0.015 kg/d) after postweaning period. However, no differences ($P > 0.10$) among treatments were observed in daily feed intake, ADG, and final BW after 42-d postweaning period (0.48 ± 0.013 kg/d, 0.33 ± 0.010 kg/d, and 21.4 ± 0.43 kg, respectively).

Discussion and Conclusions

Benefits of microalgae were observed on health status and performance compared with antibiotics encouraging the use of algae as an alternative to manage early postweaning disorders. In conclusion, supplementation of algae plays an important role in improving gut health and maintaining performance when antibiotic use will be severely reduced across most of European countries.