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TITLE

HIGH PREVALENCE OF ANEMIA IN DANISH PIGLETS AT WEANING

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CONTENT

Background and Objectives

It is common practice to provide piglets 200 mg of iron-supplementation at birth in Danish sow herds. Increasing litter size at birth and weaning in modern sows may have increased the necessary dose for iron supplementation.

The aim of this study was to investigate the hemoglobin level in Danish piglets at weaning.

Material and methods

A total of 61 Danish sow herds were selected for the study. In each herd blood samples were obtained from 20 randomly selected piglets from different sows within the last week before weaning. Hemoglobin level was measured by a hemocue Hb 201+(HemoCue). Anemia was defined as hemoglobin below 90 g/L. Causes of low levels were investigated and corrections were performed. Hemoglobin levels were re-examined about two month later.

Results

Hemoglobin levels were approximately normal distributed (mean = 104.9 g/L; SD = 19.8 g/L; n=1131 piglets).

The mean with-in herd prevalence of piglets with anemia was 19 % (range 0-90 %).

Causes of anemia included, low dose of iron supplementation, Mycoplasma suis-infection and unknown.

Hemoglobin levels were re-examined in 26 herds. An increased and decreased level of hemoglobin was observed in 18 and 8 herds respectively.

Discussion and conclusion

The study demonstrates that anemia in piglets at weaning is a highly prevalent problem in some herds.

Interestingly causes of anemia could not be detected in several herds, indicating that increasing litter size may have increased the need for iron-supplementation. This needs to be further investigated.

Re-examining herds demonstrated that hemoglobin levels in piglets at weaning may vary between batches.

Indicating a possible biological variation between batches.

In conclusion, anemia is highly prevalent in piglets at weaning and routine examinations of hemoglobin levels and iron-supplementation procedures are indicated.