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ANIMAL-BASED MEASURES ON ITALIAN HEAVY PIGS AT SLAUGHTERHOUSE AND RELATIONS WITH ANIMAL WELFARE ON FARM

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Introduction

Animal-based measures (ABMs) can be used effectively in the evaluation of animal welfare (AW) on farm. Some ABMs might be also efficiently used during slaughterhouse inspections. The aim of this work was to investigate the possibility of exploiting ABMs, collected at slaughterhouse on Italian heavy pigs (165Kg), to obtain information about AW on farm.

Material & Methods

Twenty-eight ABMs were tested at slaughterhouse on 62 batches of finishing pigs belonging to 54 different pig farms of Northern Italy. The observations were carried out during ante-mortem (n=10,085 pigs) and post-mortem inspections (n=7,952 pigs). Fifteen selected ABMs were evaluated both at slaughterhouse (118.5±45 pigs per farm) and on farm (26.3±4.8 pigs per farm) for 16 different farms chosen randomly.

Results

Four ABMs were not observed at slaughterhouse (tail biting, scouring, rectal prolapse and twisted snouts). The two ABMs with a higher prevalence at slaughterhouse were manure on the body grade 1 (28.36%) and dermatitis (28.03%). The prevalence of ABMs showing AW problems was higher at slaughter compared to farm. In particular, significant differences between ABMs were founded for non-uniformity of size, 3.0±0.6 and 1.8±0.9 ($P<0.05$), and dermatitis, 34.3±4.8 and 1.8±0.7 ($P<0.001$) for slaughterhouse and on farm observations respectively.

Discussion & Conclusion

The comparison between ABMs observed at slaughterhouse and at farm-level showed a good correlation and slaughterhouse proved to be a better detection site for some indicators. Besides, observations at slaughterhouse are easier to perform compared to observations on farm and allow to monitor and record constantly AW in batches all year round. According to the results of this study, slaughterhouse seems an excellent and feasible detection point to evaluate ABMs in pigs and it could be used as a tool to complete the evaluation of AW at farm-level.

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