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TITLE

REVEALING THE UNSEEN: USE OF 24 H CAMERA SURVEILLANCE DIAGNOSED SEVERE MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS AND NOT SOW HEALTH OR PARTURITION PROBLEMS

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CONTENT

Introduction- A farrowing unit of 1200 sows experienced problems with neonatal diarrhea and increased mortality. Different interventions were not successful. The local veterinarian consulted a behavioural specialist for 24 h video analysis of sow and piglet behaviour around parturition.

Material and methods: 6 high definition cameras were used for 24 h/ 7 d analysis of animal behaviour.

Results- 24h analysis showed quiet sows with a normal duration of parturition. The piglet nest was not attractive and piglets did not use it. However, also human behaviour was on camera. There was almost no supervision on day of parturition. Staff moved a sow in labour to another cage, replacing it by another sow in labour.

Parturition was extended and the litter was later treated for diarrhoea. Different staff members were cross fostering piglets on different days within and between farrowing units. Biosecurity was poor with staff stepping into all the pens. Staff was obsessed by administration and several times passed a sick sow without detecting.

Discussion and conclusion- Neonatal diarrhea can be a severe problem in farrowing units and can be a result of health problems of the sow or weak piglets. However, also management practices can be a risk factor, especially on larger farms with different co-workers. In this case, 24 h camera analysis showed poor quality of the piglet nest, but also a lack of knowledge on biosecurity of the staff. The manager assumed that farm protocols were followed. Farm visits of managers, vets and other advisors are usually short and during daytime. Video analysis provides valuable 24 h information in the field to reveal animal and in this case also human behaviour. Thereby, using video material is usually an easy way to convince caretakers, advisors and veterinarians that things need to be changed. All staff agreed on video analysis.