



WELFARE & NUTRITION

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INDUCED ABORTIONS IN SOWS AT THE END OF GESTATION, WHAT ABOUT THE SURVIVAL OF PIGLETS?

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Some medical conditions as PED or accidents may necessitate to rapidly induced sow parturition before full term. That's what happened following a major fire completely destroying the farrowing facility of an 800 sows breeding herd (two weeks farrowing batches). Sending some sows to slaughterhouse was impossible since recent administration of a vaccine with a 21 days withdrawal period was done. Significant efforts were made to accommodate sows and piglets on another pig site without any result. Thus, the recommendation was to induce parturition of the next 2 batches of sows (n=159) before full term. Two doses (175 and 131.25 µg respectively) of prostaglandins (Planate®, Merck Animal health) were administrated by intra-vulvar injection 7 hours apart. This was followed by an intra-vulvar injection of oxytocin (20 IU) 24 hours later. Six sows over 159 (4%) did not abort. Within batch A (79 sows), median time to farrowing=9 days, parturitions began at a median time of 35 hours following second dose of prostaglandin and resulted in many live piglets (62% of total births). Within batch B (74 sows), median time to farrowing=23 days, parturitions began at a median time of 32 hours following second dose of prostaglandin and resulted in lesser live piglets (10% of total births). Once induced, parturitions lasted for more than 10 hours compared to 3 hours in natural time. Two full-time employees were required over 48 hours to ensure follow-up and interventions. A total of 779 live piglets had to be euthanized at birth using a pneumatic powered captive bolt (Zephyr EXL). It could result in a serious welfare concern if people are not sensitized and well prepared to face this kind of intervention. Maybe another protocol would be used to decrease the duration of the abortion because it seems to be difficult for the sows.

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