

TITLE

NORTH AMERICAN STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF ISSUES AFFECTING THE MANAGEMENT, PERFORMANCE, AND WELFARE OF PIGS

Sarah H Ison^{1,2}, Kaitlin E Wurtz², Carly I O'Malley², Janice M Siegford²

¹ *World Animal Protection*

² *Michigan State University*

CONTENT

Changes to practices that improve pig welfare are often slow to be implemented. This may be due to the perceived importance of issues affecting pigs by stakeholders. Online surveys of North American producers (P, n=249) investigated their perception and issues related to managing pigs. Surveys were also sent to veterinarians (V, n=108) and research/extension professionals' (RE, n=123) regarding their perceptions on educating producers. Questionnaires included the open-ended questions: 'what do you consider the top three most important issues affecting the management, performance, and well-being of breeding pigs' (sow issues); and 'market hogs' (hog issues). Three independent scorers conducted qualitative analyses identifying themes. These were combined into one scoring system applied to the whole data set. Raw text was analysed using 'tidy text' in R. Issues were categorised into general themes: basic health and functioning (BH), which was mentioned most often (46%), followed by human inputs (HI; 21%), environmental inputs (EI; 15%), human issues (HIS; 11%), and behaviour/welfare (BW; 7%). General themes were further categorised into specific themes, which were different between sows and hogs for all categories except HI. Most notably, 'space' (64 vs. 8), 'air quality' (58 vs. 13) and 'environment' (57 vs. 29) were mentioned as EI more often for hogs than sows, whereas, 'structure/soundness' (51 vs. 12) and 'productivity' (121 vs. 39) were mentioned more as BH for sows than hogs. When extracting the most used individual words (excluding stop words like 'a' and 'of') from the raw text, the word 'welfare' was used more often by RE (32 times) and V (25 times) than P (3 times). Survey respondents were concerned with all other issues above behaviour/welfare, which could explain why welfare improvements are slow. However, consumers increasingly prefer products from pigs treated humanely that can behave naturally, highlighting a mismatch between industry and consumer concerns.