



## WELFARE & NUTRITION

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### **INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT FARROWING AND WEANING SYSTEMS ON THE WELFARE AND HEALTH OF WEANER PIGS**

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#### **Introduction**

In modern pig husbandry, animal welfare is an important factor for raising healthy animals. In this study effects of early socialization in farrowing units and effects of mixing pigs at different ages on their welfare and health were examined.

#### **Material /Methods**

Piglets were raised either in single-litter-systems with conventional farrowing crates (FC) or free-movement-pens (FMP) or a multi-litter system with group-housing (GH).

There were additionally three different postweaning systems: a standard system with mixing and regrouping at weaning (control group CG), a system where the weaners were left in their farrowing system (weaning-in-farrowing unit WiFu) and a wean-to-finish (WetoFi) system (more space).

Eight consecutive batches were performed, where piglets were tail-docked or undocked batchwise.

Scorings for claw health, skin lesions, lameness, diarrhea and coughing were performed every two weeks during the weaning period (T1, T3, T5), tail lesions were scored weekly (T1 – T5).

#### **Results**

At T1 GH-piglets had less skin lesions than the FC- or FMP-piglets. From T1 to T5, skin lesions decreased in the CG and the WetoFi-group in contrast to the WiFu-group.

In the WetoFi-group significantly more claw lesions developed at T1 than in the other groups. From T1 to T5, claw lesions decreased again and were less severe in all groups.

Tail lesions increased from T1 to T5 and got worse in all weaning-systems, especially in undocked CG-pigs. At T5, GH-piglets showed more severe tail lesions than FC- or FMP-piglets.

#### **Discussion/Conclusion**

Less skin lesions in GH-piglets indicate a positive benefit of early socialization. Development of claw lesions shortly after weaning depended on floor conditions. Leaving the piglets in their farrowing crate seems to be the least stressful kind of weaning. More frequent and severe tail lesions at the end of weaning may be a result of less space availability and insufficient enrichment in the pens.