



## REPRODUCTION

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### **HIGH NUMBERS OF STILLBIRTHS CAUSED BY AN UTEROTONIC AGENT DURING FARROWING**

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#### **Introduction**

A good target level for stillbirths per litter varies between 5-7% of total born piglets in hyper-prolific sows. Large litter size, duration of farrowing, uterotonic agents and infections have been described being major risk factors for increased percentage of stillbirths.

#### **Material & Methods**

A piglet-producing herd suffered from an increased stillbirth rate of 8.7%. A herd examination was conducted to reveal the general health status of the herd. The birth process of ten sows was analysed for birth management, total duration of birth and duration of piglet expulsion. Each piglet was scored for meconium staining and vitality. In addition, material from stillborn and weak-born piglets was subjected to further examinations.

#### **Results**

The general physical examination of the sows before farrowing revealed no abnormalities. During parturition, all sows routinely received an intramuscular treatment of 35 µg carbetocin, which caused a prolonged piglet-to-piglet interval directly after application, loss of colostrum and an increased number of weak and stillborn piglets. Histological examination of five heart samples of stillborn piglets was without findings. Moreover, a qPCR for porcine circovirus type 2 on these samples was negative. Serology on pre-colostral serum samples of one litter with a mummified piglet was negative for porcine parvovirus. Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus was excluded by PCR examination of the serum of ten weak-born piglets. After stopping the routine treatment with carbetocin and improving the birth management, the level of stillbirths decreased to 4.6%.

#### **Discussion & Conclusion**

Herd problems with stillbirths require a comprehensive herd investigation including monitoring the birth management and ruling out potential pathogens. In this case, the administration of carbetocin during parturition led to severe undesirable side effects. A good monitoring during the farrowing process combined with appropriate measures and the omission of prophylactic carbetocin administration enhances the birth process and thereby piglets' survival.