



HERD HEALTH MANAGEMENT & ECONOMY

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EAR NECROSIS IN GROWERS RELATED TO STRAY VOLTAGE? A CASE REPORT

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Objective

Ear necrosis is a common issue on French farms. Effects on pig performance are usually moderate, still the pathology is stressful for farmers and may raise welfare concerns. Moreover, in some cases large numbers of pigs are affected, with extensive lesions, leading to dramatic consequences. Little is known about etiology and risk factors. This case aims to show the possible implication of stray voltage.

Materials and methods

The case takes place in a 160-sow farrow-to-finish farm, in May 2017. Piglets are weaned at 28 days of age (doa) and are sent in growing units where they stay up to 70 doa. Ear necrosis usually appears around 40 doa and can affect up to 75% of piglets in a batch. Housing conditions were investigated and are good regarding animal welfare.

Stray voltage was measured with a multimeter in 3 pens at several points: stainless feeders and drinkers, concrete ground, fans. No significant voltage could be measured in feeders, ground, and fans ($U < 40\text{mV}$), but measures ranged from 150 to 350mV in drinkers.

Daily weight gain from weaning to 70 doa (DWG 28-70), losses in growing units, and incidence rate of ear necrosis were monitored on 8 batches before and after earthing of drinkers (4 and 4 batches respectively).

Results

Earthing of drinkers was done in August 2017. Losses in growing units dropped from [2.1% - 7% - 6.5% - 5.6%] before earthing to [1.4% - 2.9% - 4.1% - 2.8%] after. No impact on DWG 28-70 could be evidenced. After earthing, no case of ear necrosis were noticed on the 1st, 2nd, and 4th batch. On the 3rd one, incidence was around 5%.

Conclusion

This case report suggests the possible implication of stray voltage on ear necrosis prevalence and severity. Further investigations are needed to explore this suspected risk factor.