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## **SKIN LESIONS ON HEAVY PIGS (SLAUGHTERED AT 170 KG) AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH THE PREVALENCE OF HAM DEFECTS**

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### **Introduction**

Skin lesions due to fighting before slaughter are a welfare problem with economic losses for producers and abattoirs. The Aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of skin lesions at a slaughterhouse over one year in relation to slaughter season and overnight lairage, determining if they could have an impact on ham defects.

### **Materials & Methods**

In one year 648 pig batches were scored during slaughter procedures for skin lesions and classified for ham defects according to IPQ (Italian Parma Quality) standards. The anterior and posterior parts of the carcass were separately scored according to a 3-point scale adapted from the Welfare Quality Protocol.

### **Results**

An annual median of 64,0% of carcasses per batch with severe anterior scratches and a mean of 46,4% for posterior scratches were found. Autumn was the worst season for both skin lesions and ham defects ( $P < 0,001$ ). Overnight lairage resulted in higher prevalence of severe cranial scratches (70,2% vs 58,0%,  $P = 0,02$ ) and veining defect (1,96% vs 1,46%,  $P = 0,002$ ), while it had a preventive effect for petechial haemorrhaging (0,41% vs 0,84%,  $P < 0,001$ ). A correlation ( $r = 0,27$ ,  $P < 0,001$ ) was found between prevalence per batch of severe posterior scratches and IPQ hematomas.

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

Although both skin lesions and IPQ hematomas showed a maximum during autumn, only a low positive correlation between them was found. This poor correlation can be partly explained by an inappropriate observer position on the slaughter line, indicated also by a 0 median for carcass external hematomas. The contradiction between our seasonal trends and those of previous studies reveal that other factors over-riding environmental conditions should be considered. In conclusion the present study confirms that skin lesions represent a problem also for heavy pigs and that overnight lairage and slaughtering season can affect their prevalence.

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