Experience from Switzerland on ensuring the welfare of pigs

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• History of Swiss regulations regarding the welfare of pigs
• Group housing of dry sows
• Loose farrowing systems
• Foraging material and tail docking
• Conclusions
Swiss animal welfare legislation

Pre-testing of farm animal housing systems
Centre for proper housing of ruminants and pigs

1981

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1997

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2001

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2008

→

2013

→

2018

Group housing

→ 2007

Loose housing

→ 2007

Tail docking

→ 2008

Foraging material

→ 2013

Fully slatted floor pens

→ 2018

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Group housing of dry sows

Swiss animal welfare ordinance

Art. 48: Pigs shall be kept in groups, except in the case of sows during the suckling and mating period and boars at sexual maturity.

Art. 49: Crates for dry and pregnant sows shall only be used during the mating period and at most for ten days.

Enforced in 1997 for newly built housing systems

Transitional period for existing housing systems lasting until 2007
Group housing of dry sows

Group housing systems used in Switzerland
Group housing of dry sows

Research on group housing systems in Switzerland

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Group housing of dry sows

Direct payments and label production

* mandatory provision of litter in the lying area
Swiss animal welfare ordinance

Art. 50: Farrowing pens shall be designed in such a way that the **sow can turn freely**. During the parturition phase, the sow may be crated in exceptional cases (savaging of piglets, limb lesions) and **at most for three days** after farrowing. Enforced in **1997** for newly built housing systems

Transitional period for existing housing systems lasting until **2007**
Loose farrowing systems

Farrowing systems used in Switzerland
Loose farrowing systems

Research on loose farrowing systems in Switzerland

1992

1996

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Loose farrowing systems

Research on loose farrowing systems in Switzerland

Weber et al. (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Farrowing crates</th>
<th>Farrowing pens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of farms</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of litters</td>
<td>44'837</td>
<td>18'824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter size at birth</td>
<td>11,0</td>
<td>11,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter size at weaning</td>
<td>9,6</td>
<td>9,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piglet losses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Total</td>
<td>1,42</td>
<td>1,40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12,1</td>
<td>12,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Crushed</td>
<td>0,52</td>
<td>0,62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>5,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other reasons of death</td>
<td>0,89</td>
<td>0,78</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,6</td>
<td>6,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foraging material and tail docking

Swiss animal welfare ordinance

Art. 44: Pigs shall have **permanent access** to straw, roughage or other equivalent material.

- **Enforced in 2008** for newly built housing systems.
- **Transitional period** for existing housing systems lasting until 2013

Art. 18: In pigs, docking of the tail is prohibited.

- **Enforced in 2001 / 2008**
Foraging material and tail docking

Research on tail-biting in Switzerland

Data collection in 2000-2001

Comparison of fattening pigs kept in conventional pens (fully slatted floor; N=39 farms) and animal-friendly pens (partly slatted floor, straw bedding in the lying area, outdoor yard; N=58 farms)

Four visits per farm; clinical examination of 30 pigs per visit

Prevalence of tail-biting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Animal-friendly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
<td>0.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>33.1 %</td>
<td>15.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schnider (2002)
Research on foraging material in Switzerland

2 experiments with 4 materials each
16 groups of 6 finishing pigs kept in pens with partly slatted floors
Half of the groups were fed restrictively, the other half ad libitum
Foraging materials changed every 3 weeks
Recording of exploratory behaviour directed to the enrichment materials on the 2nd and 18th day after provision of a new enrichment material

Zwicker et al. (2013)
Foraging material and tail docking

Frequency exploring material after 2 and 18 days of habituation

Manipulation of pen mates was infrequent in both experiments, and was influenced neither by enrichment material nor by day of observation.
Reduce the risk for tail-biting

Enriched housing conditions throughout the rearing period

⇒ Pigs must have permanent access to appropriate foraging material.

⇒ Long straw or other material suitable for nest building must be added to the pen some days before farrowing and sufficient litter during the suckling period.

⇒ Farrowing pens must have a lying area made of solid floor.

⇒ Weaned piglets must not be kept in fully slatted floor pens.

⇒ Fully slatted floor pens for fattening pigs will be banned by 2018.
Concluding remarks

Ways to ensure the implementation of animal welfare legislation

Applied research

Knowledge transfer to farmers

Transitional periods of sufficient duration

Economic incentives (label production, direct payments)

On-farm controls