

Confinement before farrowing affects the performance of nest building behaviors but not the progress of parturition

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INTRODUCTION

The effects of confinement prior to farrowing on the performance of nest building behaviours and progress of parturition were investigated using hyper-prolific Danbred hybrid sows.

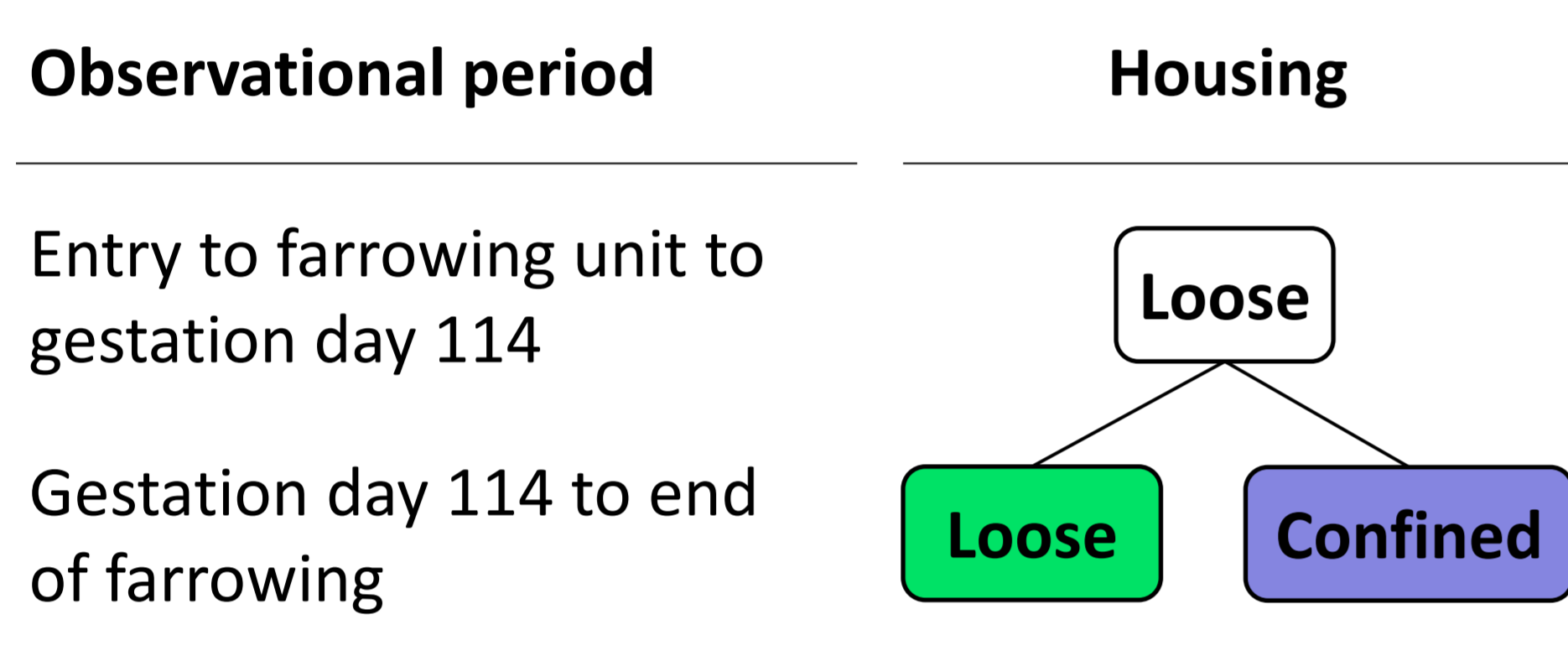


Figure 1. Illustration of the experimental design.

MATERIALS & METHODS

- 80 sows (parity 1-3) were either loose housed in a freedom farrowing pen or confined in the same pen from gestation day 114 to the end of farrowing (Figure 1).
- All sows had access to a straw rack that was filled up daily.
- Sow behaviours and postures were obtained continuously during the last 24 hours before parturition from video recordings.
- The time of birth of every piglet was registered, and it was noted if the piglet was alive or stillborn

RESULTS

- Confinement **did not** influence the duration of the nest building period.
- Confinement affected the performance of nest building behaviours (Figure 2).
- Confinement did not affect litter characteristics or farrowing progress (Table 1).

Table 1: Litter characteristics and farrowing progress for loose housed and confined sows.

	Loose	Confined	P-value
Sows	40	40	
Total born, no.	17.4	17.6	0.735
Live born piglets, no.	16.9	16.6	0.218
Stillborn piglets, %	3.4	5.1	0.131
Farrowing duration, min	284	257	0.327
Birth interval, min	17	16	0.299
Birth duration, min	153	148	0.751

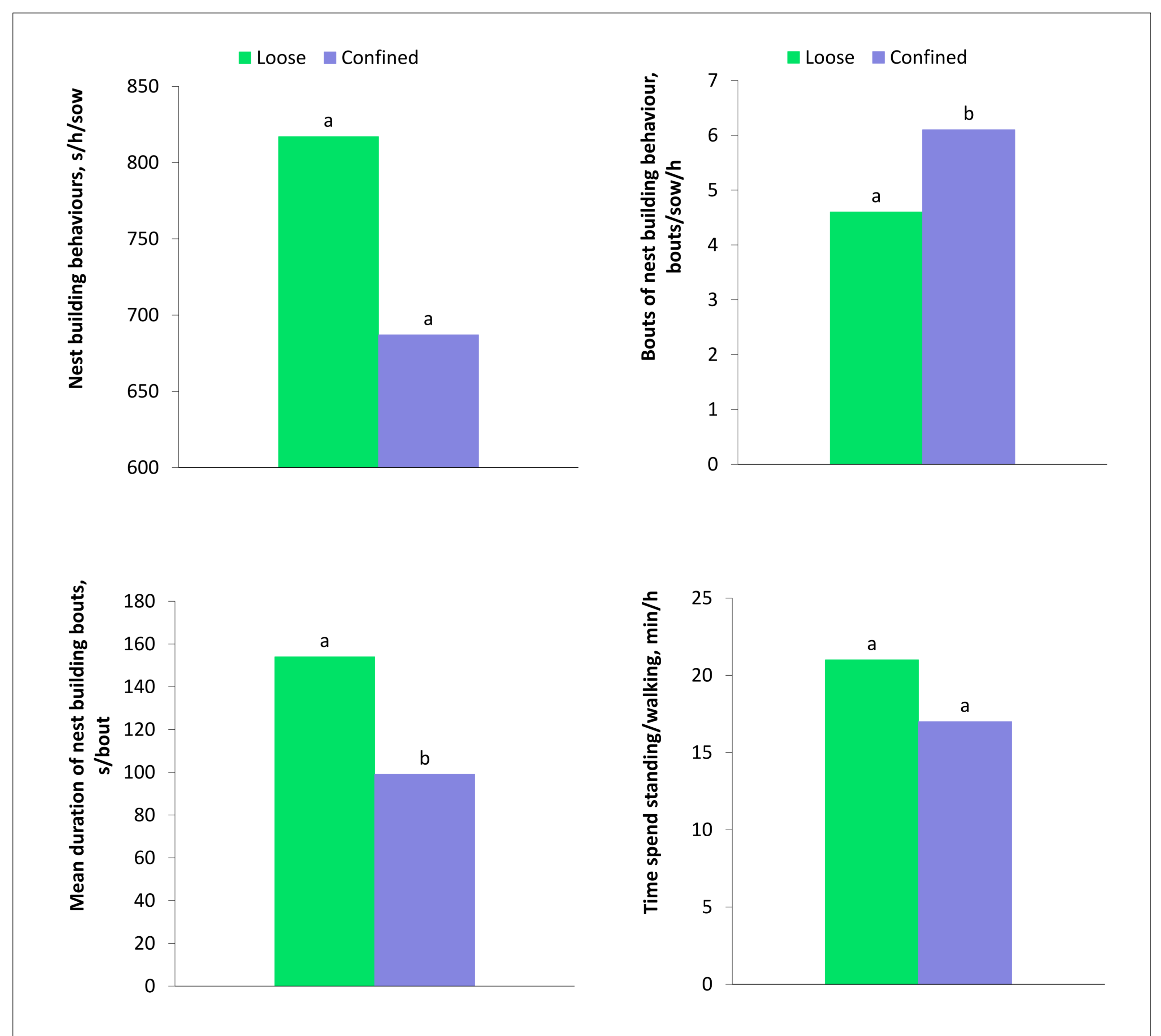


Figure 2. Sow activity and nest building behaviours.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, confining the sows during nest building and farrowing decreased the performance of nest building behaviours, but confinement did not prolong the progress of parturition compared to loose housed sows.