

A solution for high production numbers in farrowing units?

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Introduction

Large litters and high production numbers are pursued but accompanying lower birth weights, increased mortality and (un)capability of the sow to nurse all those piglets are often overlooked.

Piglet nurseries or foster sows may offer a solution.

Objective

The present study aims to compare production results (growth and mortality rate) of piglets with the mother sow, raised by a foster sow, or piglets in a rescue deck.

Material and methods

Experimental design

- Piglets with the mother sow
- Piglets with a foster sow
- Piglets in a rescue deck (either the 'excess' most heavy pigs in a litter, or an entire uniform litter of 12 piglets so that the mother sow can be used as a foster sow)

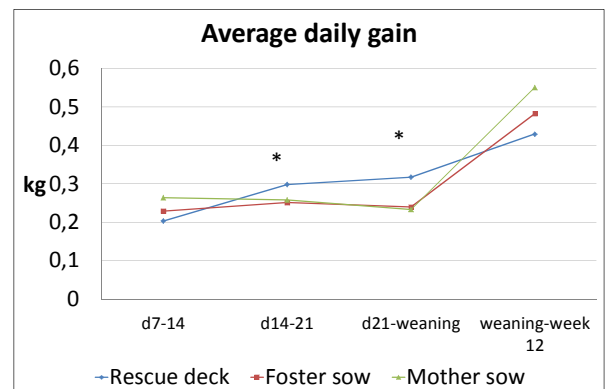
Measurements and observations

- Pigs were weighed at d7, d14, d21 and at weaning
- Mortality was registered on a daily base



Results and discussion

- There were no differences in mortality rate
- Differences in average daily gain appear in the farrowing room → rescue decks do not limit the piglets in milk intake



- These differences disappear in the weaner unit → all piglets have ad libitum access to feed

Conclusion

Rescue decks can give an advantage in ADG to piglets, but the advantage is temporary and disappears after weaning.