

The SchwIP management tool for tail biting in fattening pigs: a comprehensive approach for a complex problem

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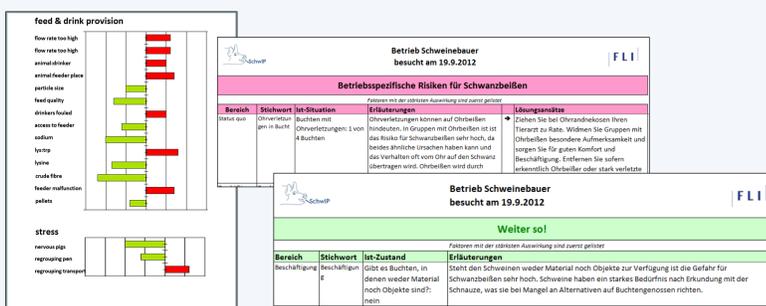
Background & Aim

Tail biting is a high impact welfare issue in pigs with multifactorial causation. Our aims were:

- to develop and evaluate a novel tool for tail biting prevention in German fattening pigs
- to integrate knowledge transfer into the tool

Methods

- The “SchwIP” tool combined animal health and welfare planning with farm individual risk assessment
- The integrated automated spreadsheet
 - allowed farm assessment and feedback on 1 day
 - contained risk factor impact weight by experts
 - generated a farm specific report based on interview and direct observations
- The report highlighted farm strengths and weaknesses and explained factors:



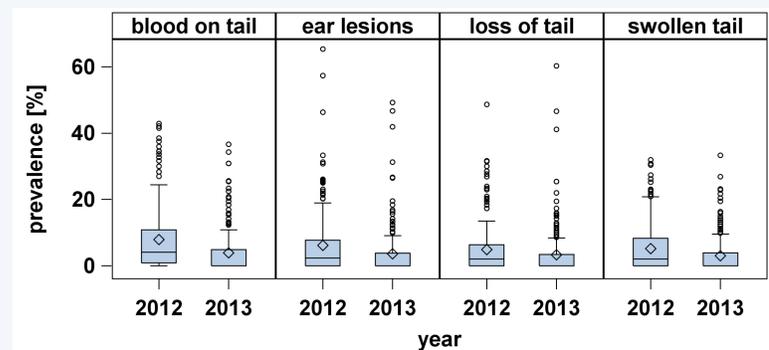
- SchwIP was applied on 188 conventional German farms once in 2012 and 2013, respectively, by 84 trained farm advisers and veterinarians (AV)
- 146 of the participating farmers and 48 AV completed anonymous feedback questionnaires
- Total risk = % of maximum possible risk weight sum
- Differences of risk points or lesion prevalences were tested with Wilcoxon signed rank tests. Lesion tests were Bonferroni corrected.

Conclusions

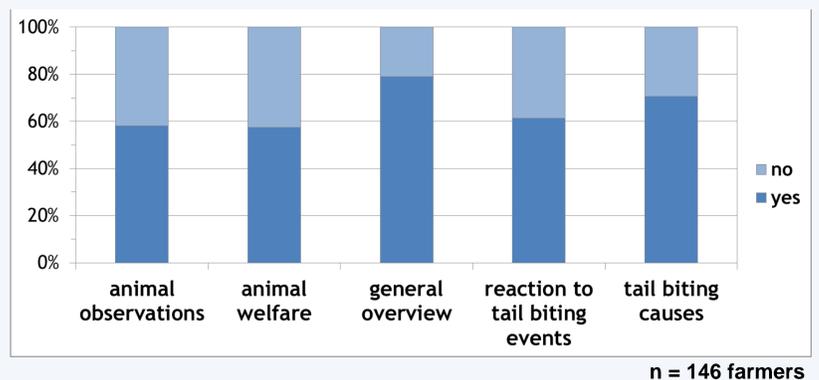
- Combining risk analysis with animal health and welfare planning seems a promising approach for the reduction of tail biting in fattening pigs.
- Farm specific reports with causal explanations facilitate farmer engagement and knowledge transfer.

Results

- Median (Q25 - Q75) fattening places per farm: 1,200 (850 - 1,710)
- Total tail biting risk significantly decreased from 2012 to 2013 (median difference -3.5 %, Q25 = -8.2, Q75 = 1.1, p < 0.01)
- Prevalences of lesions also decreased significantly (median differences range 0 to -2.2%, all p<0.05):



- The general approach was well received by participants
- Farmers gained new knowledge on:



- 79% of AV stated that they would be able to integrate SchwIP in their daily work

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