FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF WEANED PIGS FED EITHER PELLETS OR MEAL:
EFFECTS OF THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS PER FEEDING PLACE

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INTRODUCTION

- Tube feeders with integrated drinkers are said to allow pigs choosing between wet and dry feed.
- Recommendations suggest to group until 60 pigs around such a feeder…
- What’s the impact of the number of pigs/feeding place on water intake and feeding behaviour when pigs are fed meal or pellets?

AIMS

To compare water intake and feeding behaviour of 30 versus 50 pigs fed meal or pellets in a tube feeder with integrated drinkers.

METHODS

Experimental design:
- 160 weaned pigs (7.8 - 25.9 kg) fed meal (m) or pellets (p)
- group size (Gs): 30 pigs (G30) or 50 pigs (G50)
- one tube feeder per pen = 4 available wet/dry feeding places

Behavioural observations (24 hours, once a week, for 6 weeks):
- Number (N) of pigs interacting with the feeder (instantaneous sampling)
- Occupation Time (OT): % of time when at least one pig interacts with the feeder (continuous observations)
- Utilisation Time of drinkers (UT): minutes when at least 1 stimulation of drinkers was registered (continuous observations)

Behavioural estimations:
- Time at the feeder (T, min/24h.pig) : \( T = N \times 1440 \times OT/Gs \)
- Occupation Rate (OR, %) : OR = N \times OT/4
- Drinking time (D, min/24h.pig): D = UT/Gs

RESULTS

1/ Time at the feeder, drinking time and water intake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>G30m</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>G50m</th>
<th>G30p</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>G50p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T (min/24h.pig)</td>
<td>167.7 ± 20.4</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>158.3 ± 27.8</td>
<td>108.3 ± 11.4</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>114.1 ± 10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (min/24h.pig)</td>
<td>31.2 ± 9.6</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>22.7 ± 4.8</td>
<td>22.9 ± 4.8</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>18.3 ± 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wi (l/24h.pig)</td>
<td>2.3 ± 1.0</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.9 ± 0.9</td>
<td>2.1 ± 0.9</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.7 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NS: non significant; *: p<0.05; ***: p<0.001

2/ Occupation rate of the feeder

CONCLUSIONS

1/ When using a tube-feeder with integrated drinkers:
- the number of pigs per feeding place influences feeding behaviour
- this effect varied according to food presentation

2/ Food presentation is important to determine an optimal number of pigs/feeding place