

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): $D = UT / Gs$

Water intake measurement:

- Mean daily water intake (Wi, l/24h.pig): one measure per group and per day, divided by Gs

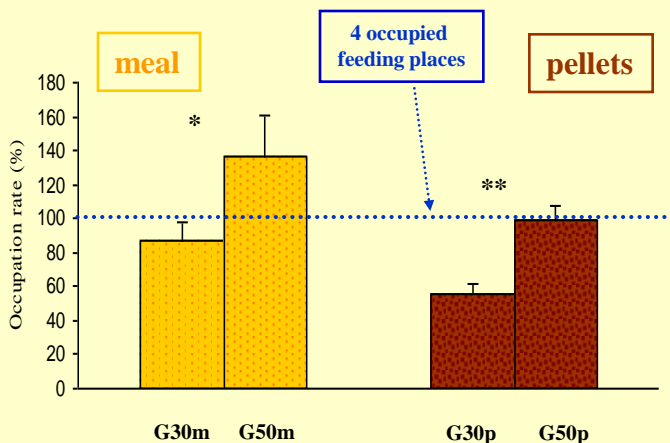
RESULTS

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

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

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