

DOES ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE OF ORGANIC PIGS DIFFER BETWEEN HUSBANDRY SYSTEMS?

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In the course of the CORE Organic II project ProPIG, animal health and welfare (AHW) of organic pigs in 8 European countries was assessed to compare three husbandry systems (using non-parametric tests with $p < 0.05$): indoor with outside run (IN: $n=34$ farms), outdoor (OUT: $n=12$) and partly outdoor (POUT: $n=28$). The hypothesis was that all three systems can deliver good welfare when well managed. Seven trained observers assessed pregnant sows (SO), weaners (WE) and fatteners (FA) using animal-based parameters.

Across systems, the median prevalence of several AHW problems was 0% (shoulder lesions SO; ectoparasites SO, FA; tail lesions and lameness WE; runts FA). Also no differences between husbandry systems in the prevalence of vulva deformation in SO (10.7%, 3.0%, 8.7%); short tails in WE (0%, 0.5%, 2.2%) or in FA (1.8%, 2.3%, 6.5%).

OUT had lower prevalence of respiratory problems in WE and FA (both 0% OUT, >60% POUT, IN). Signs of diarrhoea in WE were less frequent in OUT (0%) than in IN (25.0%), and diarrhoea in FA was less frequent in OUT than in POUT and IN (0%, 0%, 8.3%). OUT had fewer lame sows than POUT and IN (0%, 3.4%, 7.1%).

The results showed that, across systems, prevalences of most AHW areas but respiratory problems in IN and POUT and diarrhoea in IN were low. Beyond that, OUT appeared to be beneficial with regard to several areas of AHW, which could be explained by the environmental conditions, e.g. respiratory problems (air quality), diarrhoea (exposure to faeces) and lameness (flooring). POUT farms in most cases kept SO outdoors and WE and FA similar to IN farms, and this was reflected in the results obtained for these animal categories. It can be concluded, that systems do differ regarding AHW. Therefore AHW benchmarking should consider the husbandry system.