

Could a different management routine that strengthens the mother-offspring bond contribute to a more efficient organic piglet production?

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Outline

- Background
- Project design
- Material collected
- Preliminary results
- Further studies



Background

Lactational oestrus is an obstacle for batch-wise farrowing

- In Swedish organic farming lactating sows are usually group housed
- Group housing does not provide sufficient suckling inhibition Boe (1993) and 40-47% ovulate during late lactation Rydhmer et al. (2005)
- Many factors affect lactational oestrus Hulten et al. (2006) Wallenbeck et al.(2009)
 - Suckling behaviour
 - Sow body condition at weaning
 - Litter weight gain

Background cont.

Swedish organic piglet production also struggles with

- Large weight variation within litter at weaning
- High piglet mortality from birth to weaning Lindgren et al. (2013)



Could different managerial ways
alter suckling and suckling
behaviour?

Project design

- A comparison between three different management routines
- In total 43 Yorkshire sows with piglets
- Weaning at six week post-partum
- Fed ad lib when group housed



Treatment	Time spent in farrowing pen	Time spent group housed
W1	1 week	5 weeks
W2	2 weeks	4 weeks
W3	3 weeks	3 weeks

Housing



Material collected

From sows

- Weekly udder filling
- Sows back fat and weight at farrowing and weaning
- Feaces from day 21 post partum for progesterone analysis
- Saliva and feaces for cortisol analysis for the time around group housing



Material collected

From piglets

- Weekly weights of piglets from birth to weaning
- When and where piglets died

Other

- Video recordings from group housing until weaning
- Feed-competition to determine rank



Preliminary results

Days from weaning to standing oestrus



- Treatment W2 and W3 differed significantly from treatment W1, $p < 0.05$.
- Possibly piglets of treatment W1 were more depend on suckling at the start of group housing more stable suckling throughout the lactational period.

Preliminary results cont.

Piglet mortality

	Treatment W1	Treatment W2	Treatment W3
Died in farrowing pen	18%	24%	19%
Died in group pen	11%	6%	3%
Total mortality	27%	30%	22%

Further studies

- More data to be analyzed
- Induction of oestrus by boar contact



Thank you for your attention.



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