

PIGSMELL



Social Stability as a Foundation to Improve Health and Welfare in Pigs: The Role of Intraspecific Communication

Farm animals are generally social species and thus their social environment is important for them to have good health and welfare. In nature pigs form a stable social structure and disruption of this stability rarely occurs. However, in farming conditions social disruption is often unavoidable as part of husbandry practices such as regrouping animals. An unstable social environment may create chronic stress for pigs and have consequences for their health, welfare and growth. Most research focusses on remedies to the problems, but do not address the root of the issue. This project will investigate pig welfare by studying how pigs communicate, and how this can support social stability. It will also study the effect of pheromones when pigs are removed and reintroduced to their original group. Behaviour and physiological methods will be used to evaluate the outcome. The methods will then be applied to commercial farm conditions in order to provide the pig industry with new tools to deal with these events. Lastly, a cost-benefit analysis of the application of pheromones to improve social stability will be carried out to inform farmers about the financial aspects of implementing this method.

Project Duration: 36 months

(16M University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna + 2M IRSEA + 18M Teagasc)

Collaborating Institutions: Teagasc Food Research Centre Moorepark, Ireland
University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna (VetMedUni), Austria
IRSEA, France

Project Team:

| <u>RL2025 Fellow</u> | <u>Teagasc Supervisor</u> | <u>Outgoing Phase Supervisor</u> | <u>Secondment Supervisor</u> |
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| Dr Jen-Yun Chou | Dr Keelin O'Driscoll Teagasc, Ireland | Prof Jean-Loup Rault VetMedUni, Austria | Dr Míriam Marcet-Rius IRSEA, France |