Tail Biting Risk Factors in Pigs



Tail biting is a result of pigs experiencing stress. Stress can come from many sources & the risk factors can be different for each farm, which is why tail-biting can be hard to manage. When a pig experiences stress that they find difficult to cope with, tail biting is a reaction that often occurs. Usually it is an accumulation of stressors that cause an outbreak; this means that pigs can often cope with mild stress, but if a further stressor is added it can tip them over the edge into a tail biting outbreak. That's why it is really important to minimise stress as much as possible, so that if there is an unexpected event, the pigs will be able to cope.

Stocking Density

Pigs should be stocked at the legally required space allowance. In fact, stocking densities looser than this can reduce tail biting & improve growth rates. Appropriate stocking reduces competition at drinkers & feeders

Mixing of pigs is a stressful event as it causes fighting. All-in all-out practices should be followed as much as possible & pigs only moved if absolutely necessary due to illness.

Enternett

Social Stress

Social

Feed & Water

Pigs like to feed together, so long trough systems are often used in countries which don't dock pigs. Pigs require diets that are formulated to meet their nutritional requirements based on their age & stage. Disruption to the supply & quality of feed ingredients can result in stress & negative behaviours. All pigs should have permanent access to good quality water at an appropriate flow rate, from 2 weeks. Pipes should be cleaned & flow rates monitored

Environmental Enrichment

Pigs are highly motivated to perform exploratory behaviours. A lack of adequate enrichment can result in these behaviours being directed towards other pigs, particularly in times of stress. Enrichment is a legal requirement for all pigs, & used to give pigs something to explore & pass the time. Ideal materials are organic (e.g. wood, straw), chewable, destructible, & easily manipulated. Giving pigs a range of materials is ideal to keep them occupied.

Pen & Environment

Envionmental

Genetics