

Drinker type can affect feeding and drinking immediately post-weaning

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Background

Early-weaning often results in a delay in feeding for the first few days post-weaning. At the same time, early-weaned piglets have been observed to spend more time at the drinker and use excessive amounts of water. It is possible that the drinker type may influence initiation of feeding by accommodating the piglets' desire to perform sucking behaviour. In this study, eight pens of pigs (8 pigs/pen) weaned at 14 days of age were observed during the first 48 hours post-weaning for the frequency and duration of feeding and drinking bouts.

Objective

To determine the effect of drinker type (bowl versus bite nipple drinker) on feeding and drinking behaviour, feed intake and water usage during the first 48 hours post-weaning.

Results

Feeding and drinking during the first 48 hours post-weaning (means $\pm$ SEM).

Measure	Drinker type		P value
	Nipple	Bowl	
Duration of feeding behaviour (min/pig)	41.99 $\pm$ 5.51	71.16 $\pm$ 26.42	0.20
Apparent feed intake (g/pig/d)	44.4 $\pm$ 5.2	61.7 $\pm$ 6.4	0.024
Duration of drinking behaviour (minutes/pig)	26.08 $\pm$ 2.63	14.52 $\pm$ 0.65	0.0063
Water usage (L/pig/d)	2.08 $\pm$ 0.20	0.67 $\pm$ 0.07	0.0001

- Piglets with access to a bowl drinker had higher feed intake than those with access to a nipple drinker
- Drinking behaviour and water usage was higher in pens with nipple drinkers.

Take home message

Early-weaned pigs provided water from a nipple drinker may be using the drinker as a substitute for sucking and therefore drinking at the expense of eating during the first two days post-weaning. Providing pigs with a bowl drinker can reduce excessive drinking and encourage piglets to initiate feeding.

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