

Growth rates are related to the post-weaning behaviours of piglets

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Background

Newly weaned piglets often develop belly-nosing and sucking or chewing on the navels or ears of other pigs. Although belly-nosing is known to occur more frequently when piglets are weaned at younger ages, other individual pig characteristics related to its development still need to be explored. In this study, individual birth weights, weaning weights and growth rates were measured in seven litters of piglets (N=66) and correlated with their behaviour during the first 3 weeks post-weaning.

Objective

To examine the relationships between pre- and post-weaning growth rates and post-weaning behaviour in piglets weaned at 21 days of age.

Results

Pearson's partial correlations between post-weaning behaviour and growth rates

Behaviour	Birth weight	Pre-wean ADG	Weaning weight	Post-wean ADG	Final weight
Belly-nosing	-0.26*	-0.08	-0.14	-0.35**	-0.32*
Nosing/chewing pen-mates	-0.19	-0.06	-0.09	-0.26*	-0.23 [†]
Nosing pen walls and floor	0.20	0.45**	0.42**	0.29*	0.41**

** P < 0.01 * P < 0.05 [†] P < 0.10

- Belly-nosing ($r^2=-0.48$) and nosing and chewing of pen-mates ($r^2=-0.23$) were negatively correlated with feeding behaviour post-weaning ($P<0.05$)

Take home messages

- Piglets that are smaller at birth perform more belly-nosing post-weaning
- Piglets that perform more belly nosing and more nosing/chewing on their pen-mates spend less time at the feeder and have poorer growth rates post-weaning
- Piglets that have higher pre-weaning growth rates and weaning weights direct more nosing at the pen floor or walls, rather than at their pen-mates, and they have higher growth rates post-weaning

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