

Abstract 10:

Individual variation in growing-finishing pig feeding patterns

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The feeding patterns of growing-finishing pigs, consisting of intake, duration, frequency and rate, could potentially be used to monitor pig welfare. Feeding patterns, however, contain variation across and within days that appears unrelated to pig welfare and should be considered baseline, such as an increase in intake over time while duration and frequency decrease, and a peak in feeding activity in the afternoon. Although these patterns are clear at group level, many authors have reported large standard deviations around the means, implying that individual pigs may show vastly different patterns. Little is known about the variation in patterns at individual level, nevertheless distinct individual patterns could require different monitoring (e.g. modelling) methods. Our study aimed to gain insight into the feeding patterns of individual pigs, specifically looking into the variation between pigs and within a pig over time. We collected data from electronic feeding stations of 110 pigs (11 pigs/pen) and visualised group and individual patterns. At group level, we saw similar feeding patterns to what was expected from literature. Preliminary results showed distinct feeding strategies at the individual level. Pigs varied, for example, in the time of day during which they fed most and in the balance between feeding frequency and visit size used to obtain daily intake. These individual patterns became clearer with age. We conclude that pigs indeed show individual patterns in feeding behaviour, which develop over time. These individual patterns should be taken into account when developing welfare monitoring systems based on pig feeding patterns.