

# **Practical experiences from field: what we learned during these years working with long tail pigs**

## Critical point to analyse and consider:

- Feed and availability of feed
- Health status
- Enrichment material
- Space and general environment condition
- Genetics
- Motivation
- Farmer and stockman training

## Quality of feed

- Healthy row materials (no mycotoxin)
- Good presence of fiber (no fermentable fiber)
- Triptophane (relation with Lysin: 0,22 to 1)
- Magnesium oxide 0,2%
- Yeast (with cell wall)
- Vitamin PP 0,1%
- Vitamin group B in high quantity
  
- No antinutritional effect of some row material (toasted soybean)

Very difficult at the moment for economical situation to produce the best feed as possible

## Feed availability









Ad libitum feeding → 10 places for 30 pigs

8 hour a day the place is available \_ at least 4 hours









## **Health status is crucial**

**→ Prrs viremia is devastating for piglets**

**→ Fever, cough, anorexia**

**→ But PCV2, Flu and bacterial diseases can do the same disaster**

**Prrs positive unstable farm could be very challenging**

**PCV2 control is necessary**



## ENRICHMENT MATERIAL

- STRAW BEDDING IS THE BEST
- STRAW OR BETTER LONG HAY IN RACK QUITE GOOD

When straw is not usable ? (floor or ASF)

- Different enrichment
- Iron chain
- Wood very well disposed
- Rope
- Paper

In case of outbreak surprise them with special effects























SPACE IS NOT ENOUGH

HEALTH IS NOT ENOUGH

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ARE A KEY FACTOR

→TEMPERATURE \_ especially rapid changes

→Oxygen and NH<sub>3</sub>

→Ventilation \_ air draught / wrong flow / no flow





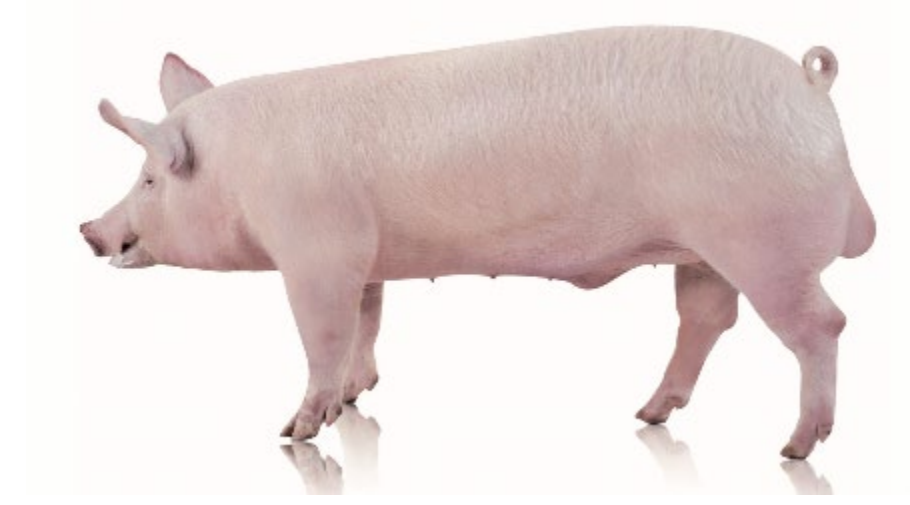
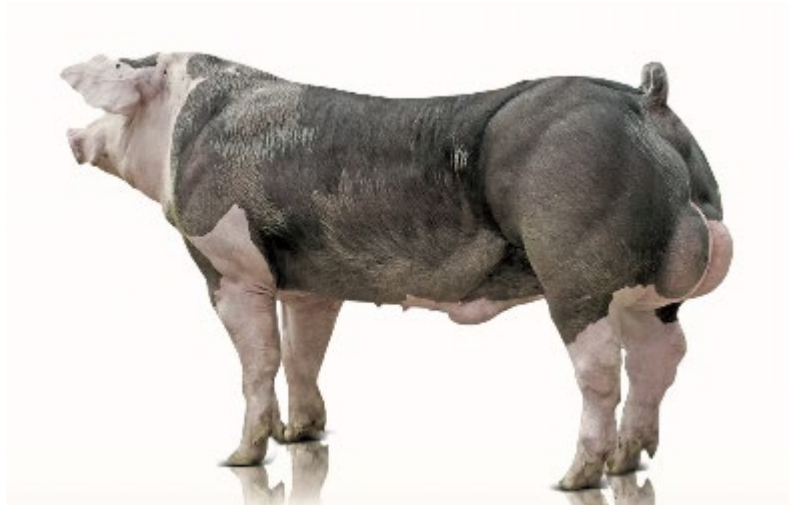




CLIMATE AND TEMPERATURE?  
VENTILATION?  
AIR QUALITY?  
AIR FLOW?

# GENETICS





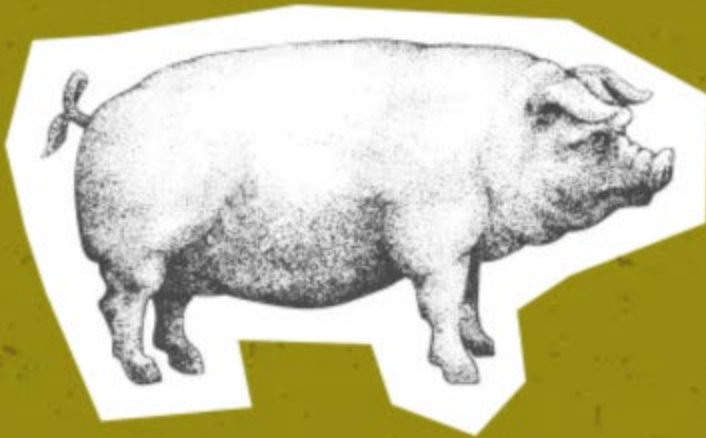
Different sows and different boars means different requirement of this animals

Are they pigs? Yes but .....

- They eat in differet way
- They grow in different way
- They have different behaviour
- They have different resistance to diseases

→ **They need different care**

MARKET DRIVEN EXPERIENCES → SEVERAL AT THE MOMENT  
→ KEY POINT IS LONG TAILS



1

**BENESSERE ANIMALE  
IN ALLEVAMENTO**

SEVERAL FARMER ARE INTERESTED FOR MORE INCOME → 8-10 € / PIG

RESULT → SOME NICE EXPERIENCES  
More production of pigs with long tails

Some disasters → a lot of lesions at slaughter

Welfare issue in not trained farm

In addition to a **reasonably expected increase of tail-lesions**, the simultaneous **increase of lung and stomach lesions** suggests, respectively, the **risk of septicemic infection from an infected tail** and a possible involvement of stressful conditions.

## Undocked tails at slaughter: effects on lung and stomach lesions



A. Scalfi (1), B. Carlineri (2), M.C. Galli (2), F. Gastardo (2)  
 (1) Chair of Small Animal Veterinary Sciences, University of Bologna, Italy  
 (2) Chair of Small Animal Veterinary Sciences, University of Bologna, Italy  
 Correspondence: [anna@veterinaria.unibo.it](mailto:anna@veterinaria.unibo.it)



### Background

The EU-legislation (20 08/120/EC) states that tail-docking should not be a routine operation, and other environmental/managerial measures shall be taken to prevent tail-biting. Towards this request, in Italy, a Governmental plan has been implemented in swine farms, leading to a sensible increase of undocked-animals currently reared in the Country.

### OBJECTIVES

The study aims to monitor tail-lesions at the slaughterhouse in docked and undocked-animals, exploring effects of tail-docking on tail, lung, pleura and gastro-intestines.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

Data were randomly collected from January to September 2020 in the biggest Italian abattoir. The study monitored and classified as docked/undocked 532 batches around 135 pigs/batch (170 kg b.w.) from 208 intensive farms. A score for each lesion was assigned to 100 pigs/batch: tail (0-2) (and acute/chronic classification) / lungs (0-4) / pleura (0-4) / stomach (0-3). The percentage of affected subjects/batches was statistically analysed by ANOVA.

### Results

The frequency of undocked-batches was 15.8%. The presence of tail-lesions was recorded in undocked-animals only (44.0 vs 0% compared to docked-animals,  $P < 0.001$ ) with a prevalence of severe-chronic lesions of 27.3%. Severe lung lesions were more frequent in undocked-animals (5.2 vs 0.6%,  $P < 0.001$ ), as well as gastric ulcers (20.1 vs 20.3%,  $P < 0.001$ ). No difference was shown for pleura.

		DOCKED TAIL	UNDOCKED TAIL	P-value
LUNG	No lesions	184	84	0.07
	Severe lesions	66	9.5	0.006
	Average score	112	144	0.001
STOMACH	Presence of ulcers	20.1	20.1	0.004
	Average score	113	125	0.089

Table 1. The percentage and average scores of the visceral lesions in docked and undocked pigs.



### Discussion & Conclusion

The Italian Governmental plan led several farmers in 2020 to rear more undocked-animals compared to the past, increasing undocked-batches at slaughter from 0% up to 15.8%. However, the present study highlights complications that might arise from the transition phase, in addition to a reasonably expected increase of tail-lesions. The simultaneous increase of lung and stomach lesions suggests, respectively, the risk of septicemic infection from an infected tail and a possible involvement of stressful conditions. Considering that successfully rearing undocked pigs is one leading indicator of welfare on farm, it seems imperative to increase efforts in supporting farmers in the transition to reduce mistakes, detrimental both for pig's welfare and health.



**Training farmers very difficult but when the challenge is clear they are open to learn**

**Farmers need help and motivation!!**

HOW TO COMUNICATE WITH FARMERS??

Very big issue

Vet could be very useful and  
open mind of their client

but we need to use some tricks!!



## HOW TO COMUNICATE WITH FARMERS??

I started to organize meeting among farmers and managing relationship

Farmer experience is easier to communicate to other farmers

- Promote farmers meeting but organized and managed by the vet
- That could be a key for successful campaign for producing more pigs with long tail
- After trials they are less scared and very optimistic
- You need to face problem and then solve otherwise nobody is moving



THANK YOU

