

Media Release



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NPA PRESS RELEASE

NPA welcomes Real Welfare report for pigs

The National Pig Association has welcomed the findings of a ground-breaking report on objective animal welfare data covering nearly 5.5 million pigs over three years.

AHDB's pioneering Real Welfare report is the culmination of a unique partnership between farmers and vets, developed in response to the pig industry's desire for science-based evidence of welfare standards within the sector.

The voluntary initiative's findings, based on on-farm assessments covering 5,463,348 pigs over three years, representing 40.5% of all pigs present on farms on the day of assessment, have been described as 'hugely positive' by NPA chief executive Zoe Davies.

The project looked beyond production systems, focusing on objective science-based indicators of the welfare of the animals, themselves, rather than on the environment the pigs are kept in.

Key findings from the biggest study of its type anywhere in the world included:

- Only 0.07% of pigs were identified as needing to be moved to a hospital pen for special treatment and, on more than three-quarters of farms, no pigs required hospitalisation
- Just 0.18% of non-hospitalised pigs were lame and, on more than three-quarters of farms, no pigs were lame
- Only 0.14% of pigs had severe tail damage and, on more than three-quarters of farms, no pigs had severe tail damage
- 70% of pigs had their tails docked, lower than in most other European countries where tail docking is permitted
- 62% of pigs had access to substrate, most of which was straw, and 32% of pigs had access to objects.

Over the years Real Welfare has been in operation, all measures of physical injuries, except tail damage, which was already low, have decreased, demonstrating an improvement to the welfare of individual animals in the British pig herd.

The report concluded: "The outcomes provide evidence of high levels of welfare and stockmanship in the British industry. They confirm that farmers look after their animals well and deal with pigs that need extra attention to safeguard their well-being."

NPA chief executive Zoe Davies said the report had highlighted areas of real strength in on-farm husbandry standards and also identified areas for improvement.

She said: “This is a truly ground-breaking report, which is the result of the pig industry’s desire to obtain a real picture of the welfare of pigs on our farms.

“Overall, the results are very impressive and confirm what we already know about the pride that British pig producers take in ensuring their animals are properly looked after.

“The assessment highlighted very low levels of tail-damage, and while the proportion of pigs that have had their tails docked at 70%, might appear high, it is far lower than other major pig producing countries, where the level often nears 100%. Despite this positive figure, however, the industry is committed to continuing to drive further reductions in the number of pigs that have docked tails.

“This farmer led initiative demonstrates to consumers exactly how high the welfare on our farms actually is and stems from a desire to be open and transparent with the public over how their food is produced, despite increasingly damaging and fake messaging from anti-meat eating organisations.”

Notes to editors

- 1) To read the report, [click here](#)
- 2) The Real Welfare scheme involves on-farm assessments of finisher pig welfare, using a set of five objective and repeatable measures, known as ‘welfare outcomes’. Carried out by vets on a regular and systematic basis, these are animal-based, rather than measured from their environment.
- 3) The five measures are:
 - Lameness
 - Tail damage
 - Body marks
 - Environmental enrichment
 - Pigs that should be in hospital pens.

Real Welfare is also used to collect information on other variables, such as feeding practice, pen variables and whether tails are docked or undocked.

More information

For more information on the report itself contact AHDB
Phone: 0247 6478910 Email: press.office@ahdb.org.uk

For pig industry reaction to the report contact Zoe Davies
Mobile: 07814 448956 Email: zoe.davies@npanet.org.uk