The Animal Welfare Concerns about Pig Husbandry in Europe

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Human-Animal-Relationship over Time

and its Impact on Attitudes about Food of Animal Origin
Changes in the human-animal relationship (1)

• In the beginning of mankind, there were only two decisions to be made: run away or chase
• Then animal domestication and religious sacrifices
• Descartes: animals are machines (vivisections)
• Jeremy Bentham (utalitarian in mid-18th century) wrote the decisive sentence for modern welfare: they cannot think, read or speak, but they feel pain and suffering like we humans
• Animal welfare associations in early 1800 in UK and 20 years later in Germany
Changes in the human-animal relationship (2)

• Today people think animal welfare more and more through companion animals: animals are friends, family members and partners
• This makes it difficult to think about food animals
• The mainstream is: humans have a great responsibility for all animals under human care
• This led to the fact that today it is not enough to care for animal protection (prevent animals from pain, injuries and suffering), but also to provide the animals optimal living conditions where they can live their behavioural repertoire = animal wellbeing
Three phases in the attitudes about food of animal origin after 1945 in Europe

1) **Lack**: More and more (affordable) food of animal origin for all (food security)
   = Improving *productivity* (with societal consensus)

2) **Risks**: Less (no) pathogens and residues
   = Optimizing *food safety* (from product inspection to lowering risks along the food chain (Reg. 178/2002))

3) **Guilt**: More personal and societal responsibility
   = Providing *sustainability* beyond CO$_2$ and climate gasses including fair trade, animal welfare and the use of antibiotics
The growing societal disagreement
...the veterinary community should act as mediator

- Lack of Consensus and Tolerance
  - No meat at all
  - No animal experiments at all
  - Food shortage

- Tolerance
  - Extensive AG on-farm shops
  - Ethical Code of Conduct = Consensus within the Majority

- Meat abounded
  - Intensive Ag Discounters
  - Need of animal experiments
  - Food shortage

Consensus

1945
2000
2017
EU Animal Welfare Legislative and Definition
EU Regulations and Directives

- Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes


- Most European countries have national Animal Welfare Acts (most elaborate in UK, Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland and Austria), and

- Specific national regulations for pig husbandry
Animal Welfare Definitions

   The „Five Freedoms“: from **hunger and thirst**, from **discomfort**, from **pain, injuries and disease**, from **restrains to expressing normal behaviour**, and from **fear and distress**

   „Animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if it is **healthy**, **comfortable**, **well-nourished**, **safe**, able to **express innate behaviour**, and if it is not suffering from **unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress.**“
Growing Concerns beyond Animal Welfare Law
Current animal protection „tools“

• „Animal Protection“ laws

• In Germany: Animal Welfare made it 2002 into the Article 20a of the Constitution (with this, animal welfare is a “state goal” (= public value)

• Manifold national and EU-Regulations on husbandry systems and animal transport

• Regular surveillance visits by state veterinarians controlling also animal welfare standards

Did it work?
Yes and No

Yes: Enormous improvements since the 50’s
No: New problems due to low meat prices:

1) the Europe-wide (except of S, FIN and CH) still “accepted” routine tail docking, although it is legally prohibited by European animal welfare law
2) the fact that male piglets are widely castrated without anaesthesia and/or analgesia,
3) the fact that pigs in confinement do not have access to different climate zones
4) the fact that non-pregnant sows and sows in early pregnancy are kept in tight single crates as well as farrowing and suckling sows in cages to prevent the crashing of piglets by the sows; and
5) the highly various frequency of lesions in carcasses due to the vastly varying health status of pig herds.
Shortages of the current animal welfare tools

- The animal protection law is predominantly "pathocentric" (= protection against pain, suffering)
  Regulating animal well being is very weak
- All animal welfare regulations are minimal standards that do not meet the growing societal expectations regarding the ethics of using animals
- We need animal-oriented indicators for quality assessment and continuous improvement processes
Future Developments
Tail docking (ethical/legal issues)

- Amputation without a medical indication is widely seen as inhumane (integrity of animals)
- However, abandoning tail docking without adapting the management to „long-tailed“ pigs, leads to massive tail biting in weaners and finishers
- Don‘t adapt the animals to the husbandry system, but the husbandry system to the animals
Tail docking (best practice issues)

- Any suboptimal living condition can trigger tail biting

- Analyse each herd, apply herd-specific measures:
  - optimise feed and feeding, water and watering, air quality, space, temperature etc; prevent disease…
  - provide rooting material and enrichment material
  - provide pen structure that allows inferior animals to hide
  - provide extra pens for separating animals from their group
  - observe animals, recognise mis-behaviour, separate animals at risk both of biting and of being bitten
Piglet castration (without pain relief)

• Castrating animals without anaesthesia/analgesia is widely seen as not any longer acceptable

• There are alternatives to castration without pain relief
  1. Surgical castration with anaesthesia/analgesia
  2. Raising entire males
  3. Immunization against GnRH
  4. Sperm selection
  5. Reduce boar taint by genetic selection, nutrition, management
  6. Detection at the slaughter line (e-nose or professional sniffers)

Ethical consideration: As soon as alternatives to surgical castration are available, the ethical justification has become obsolete

EU Declaration from 2012: Abandon surgical pig castration by 1.1.2018
# The Pro‘s and Con‘s

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<tr>
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<th><strong>Pro‘s</strong></th>
<th><strong>Con‘s</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surgical castration with anaesthesia/analgesia</td>
<td>pain relief during and after surgery</td>
<td>restraining pigs=stress local anaesthesia is painful it is still an amputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising entire males</td>
<td>no surgical procedure no pain due to surgery no amputation</td>
<td>injuries due to animals‘ fighting soft fat boar taint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunization against GnRH</td>
<td>the least stress no pain no amputation</td>
<td>poor acceptance due to wrong perception cost of vaccine</td>
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From the animal welfare standpoint: immunocastration is superior.
Welfare: Yes, but there are...

Obstacles to solve the problem:

• extra cost involved in using a/a (not paid back by consumer);
• extra work load;
• lack of acceptance slaughterhouses (entire pigs);
• perceived lack of market acceptance (immunocast.);
• problems with raising entire males,
• boar taint in meat
• lack of agreed and practical anaesthesia/analgesia protocols
Different climate zones

- Husbandry systems without outdoor areas or fresh air zones and cosy sleeping areas are seen as not any longer acceptable.

- There is quite lots of research on how to provide the animals different climate zones:
  - access to outdoor areas
  - „wintergardens“
  - one open wall
  - resting areas with litter and lids
Crates and farrowing cages

- Crates for non- and early-pregnant sows are seen as massive restraints to normal animal behaviour, as well as the piglet-protecting cages for farrowing sows.

- In some EU countries, group housing of non- and early-pregnant sows is already mandatory, other countries will have to follow.

- There is lots of research into free farrowing (already mandatory in Scandinavia and Switzerland).
Improving the animal care quality

• In all EU countries there are unacceptable huge differences in the health status and the wellbeing of animals from herd to herd (including the antibiotic use per herd)

• There are strong demands to apply „animal-oriented“ animal health/welfare indicators (% of sick, lame, injured animals, measured both at herd level and by regular slaughter checks
Herds or flocks can be ranked according to mortality, pododermatitis and condemnation as at slaughter by animal-oriented health/welfare indicators.
Pro-active Animal Welfare = preventing animal suffering

Reactive Animal Welfare = punishing animal suffering

- Animal abuse
- Court verdicts
- No permit to keep animals
- Fines
- Orders
- Consulting
- Risk-oriented state controls

Husbandry laws

- meeting the minimal standards but poor caring for the animals
- good practice procedures
- best practice procedures
Thank you!