Animal Welfare in pig production

FACT SHEET

Background information


Minimum standards apply to all categories of pigs kept for rearing and fattening e.g. piglets (from birth to weaning), weaned piglets (from weaning to 10 weeks old), fatteners (more than 10 weeks old), sows, gilts and boars. These animals are, apart from some exceptions (farrowing sows, boar), to be raised in groups. Farmers must implement measures aimed at fulfilling basic needs and preventing aggression within the group. Aggressive animals are to be kept away from the group (as are injured animals). Neither tail-docking nor reduction of corner teeth must be carried out routinely, but only where there is evidence that injuries to sows’ teats or to other pigs’ ears or tails have occurred. Before carrying out these procedures, other measures shall be taken to prevent tail-biting and other vices, taking into account environment and stocking densities. For this reason inadequate environmental conditions or management systems must be changed.

The Directive also provides for standards concerning feeding in “sufficient quality” and “permanent” access to drinking water, as well as standards concerning floor and lying area, light density and noise. Member States must carry out inspections each year on a statistically representative sample and may apply stricter provisions on their own territory than those laid down in this Directive.

Objectives

The training course will allow participants to achieve the necessary skills to:

- interpret relevant EU legislation;
- apply scientific basis for proper housing, management (including provisions of enrichment material, group housing of sows and gilts, feeding practices for dry pregnant sows and gilts, mutilation procedures such as tail-docking, tooth clipping and castration) and handling of pigs;
- assess compliance of existing farming systems (including requirements for manipulability and rooting materials, flooring types, etc.) with the current EU legislation;
- monitor animal welfare outcomes, throughout practical experience on the farm;
- carry out efficient inspections at farm level, including practical guidance on how to verify compliance of farming systems and management practices with the EU legislation;
- be aware on how a strong cooperation between competent authorities and stakeholders in the production chain can improve the welfare conditions of pigs at farms.

The course will also provide practical training on welfare inspection of pigs in farms, focused particularly on the assessment of the housing conditions and management practices.
Content of the training

The contents of the training course are listed below:

− EFSA work on the use of animal welfare indicators for assessing pig welfare;
− OIE general principles and future challenge to develop outcome based standards;
− Implementation of the EU legislation by Member States Competent Authorities: experiences and perspectives;
− Options envisaged to ensure proper enforcement of Council Directive 2008/120/EC and international perspectives;
− Biology and behaviour of pigs in natural and semi-natural conditions;
− Relevance of animal based indicators for pig welfare assessment;
− Welfare assessment protocol on farm;
− Relevance of resource based indicators for pig welfare assessment;
− Mutilation procedures: welfare implication and new strategies;
− Animal health and welfare aspects of different housing and husbandry systems for pig production and group housing and feeding strategies for sows and gilts;
− Environmental enrichment to improve pig welfare focusing on legislative requirements and practical solutions;
− Measures to fulfill basic needs and preventing aggression within the groups;
− Stakeholders’ perspective and related issues on AW in pig production: social and economic aspects of animal welfare concerning farming of pigs, farmers’ perspective on animal welfare in pig production, communication during farm inspection on animal welfare.

Targeted audience

Official veterinarians belonging to NCAs of EU MSs, EFTA, Candidate and Third Countries, involved in official controls on animal welfare aspects concerning the farming of pigs; development of good practices to improve the application of European norms and/or international standards (where appropriate).

Calendar and locations

I edition: 16-19 June 2015, Denmark
II edition: 11-14 April 2016, Sweden
III edition: 27-30 September 2016, Denmark
IV edition: 15-18 November 2016, Italy