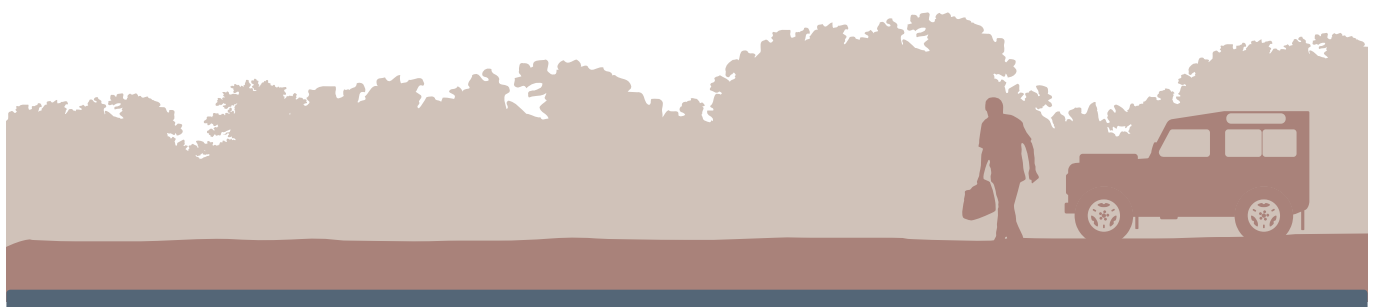


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Summary

In the first four years of the Real Welfare Scheme (2013–2017), over 8 million pigs were individually assessed by specially trained vets to provide a credible, benchmarked level of welfare at both an industry and an individual farm level. While there is always more to do, the evidence has shown, on average, the poorest performing farms have improved during this period. A summary of the overall improvements can be found below.

- Hospital – only 0.06% of pigs needed hospitalisation, showing that the majority of farmers identify and provide appropriate care (for example moving to a hospital pen) for affected pigs
- Lameness – only 0.17% of pigs were lame, showing that either levels of lameness on farms are low or that the majority of farmers identify and provide appropriate care (for example moving to a hospital pen) for affected pigs
- Tail damage – 0.11% of pigs had severe tail damage and 71% of pigs were docked. While this figure compares favourably to other parts of the world where tail docking is permitted, the pig industry is seeking to reduce the need for tail docking. Real Welfare provides an evidence base that the industry can work from and measure positive change in the future
- Body marks – only 0.16% of pigs had severe body marks, showing that farmers deal well with these pigs, and the overall level is low
- Environmental enrichment – the average enrichment ratio per pen was 0.51, showing there is scope for improvement, as enrichment is, on average, only slightly preferred to pen mates and pen fittings. For 1.2% of pigs, no enrichment was seen; this figure shows that improvements must be made, to comply with legislation
- The findings show that the vast majority of farms are either addressing welfare issues or already have them under control
- Prevalence of the four main welfare outcomes shows a decreasing trend over time, while, at the same time, there is an increasing trend for the enrichment use ratio
- A seasonal effect was identified for the prevalence of four of the welfare outcomes, with an increasing trend being apparent during autumn. However, no significant differences were observed between seasons for severe body marks
- The lack of information regarding hospital pens makes it impossible to determine whether the reduction in the percentage of the different welfare outcomes was due to better management of the hospital pens or a real decrease in the welfare outcomes over time

Introduction

The Real Welfare scheme involves on-farm assessments of finisher pig welfare, using a set of five objective and repeatable measures. The standardised data from these assessments provides information regarding on-farm welfare, as well as trends both between farms and over time.

The scheme is a world-first, with Britain leading the way in measuring pig welfare, and with no other country making such a commitment. This report highlights some potential improvements that could be made to the scheme and which will enable vets, assurance schemes, producers and others to work together to continually improve.

Real Welfare assessments on samples of finisher pigs have been a requirement of the Red Tractor Pigs Scheme since April 2013. The scheme also requires that the vets conducting the assessments have undergone specific training on the protocol. Since August 2016, Real Welfare assessments were also required for farms that finish pigs under the Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) Pigs Assurance Scheme, bringing the coverage of Real Welfare to approximately 95% of all pigs produced in the UK.

Five measures

Four measures are routinely assessed on pigs over 50 kg. The fifth measure, environmental enrichment, is optional, although the type of enrichment found in pens must be recorded.

- Hospital pigs
- Lameness
- Tail damage
- Body marks
- Environmental enrichment use

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

Assessments

Real Welfare assessments are carried out by veterinary surgeons who are members of the Pig Veterinary Society, and have been trained to assess these welfare outcomes according to a standardised protocol. The assessments are usually carried out as part of the quarterly veterinary visits, and take place between 2–4 times a year. A sample of pigs, from a range of pens, is assessed on each visit. Real Welfare outcomes are reported back to the producers as a rolling total, combining all assessments from the previous 365 days.

Assessment outcomes are then discussed between the veterinarian and the farmer, which helps identify any areas for improvement and action; these are recorded in the farm's Veterinary Health Plan. Implementation of these recommendations is audited annually. In this way, Real Welfare provides an in-built improvement method to help move the industry forward continuously.

Vital statistics

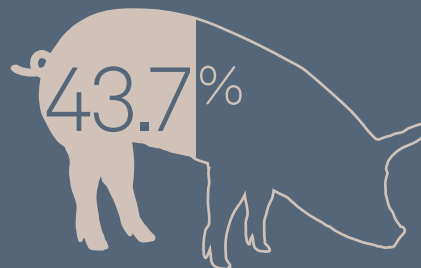
8,061,745

pigs were assessed individually over the first four years of the scheme using the Real Welfare protocol; this included 136,154 pigs from Scottish farms.

This covers all Red Tractor and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) farms that raise pigs for slaughter, equating to



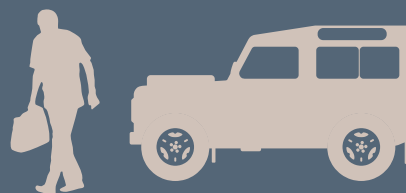
of all commercially raised pigs in the UK.



of all the pigs present on these farms on the day of the assessment were assessed as part of the Real Welfare scheme by veterinarians from

90

different vet practices.



Welfare outcomes

The following pages describe the welfare outcomes, as measured since the scheme's inception in April 2013, until June 2017. The data were collected on English (since 2013) and Scottish (since 2016) farms.

1

Hospital pigs

Scope:

This measure is assessed on all pigs in a representative number of pens, excluding those designated as 'hospital pens'.

Definition:

Any pig that would benefit from removal to hospital accommodation.

Of those pigs not already in hospital pens:



2

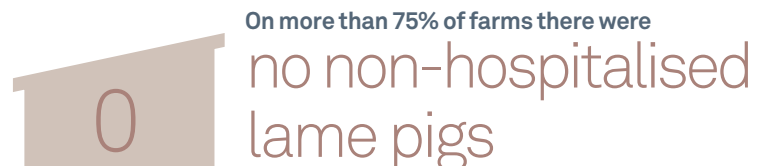
Lameness

Scope:

This measure is assessed on all pigs in a representative number of pens, excluding those pens designated as 'hospital pens'.

Definition:

Any pig that, when standing, will not bear full weight on the affected limb and/or appears to be standing on its toes. When moving, there is a shortened stride with minimum or no weight-bearing on the affected limb and a swagger of the hindquarters. The pig may still be able to trot and gallop. This does not include pigs that are only showing stiffness or uneven gait.



3

Tail damage

Scope:

This measure is assessed on a sample of pigs, in a representative number of pens, excluding those pens designated as 'hospital pens'. Recording of mild tail damage is optional (since November 2013, and not reported in this update).

Severe tail damage:

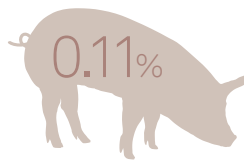
Recorded as severe if at least a proportion of the tail has been removed (by biting), the tail is swollen or held oddly, scab-covering whole tip. By definition, severe tail damage can never be obscured by dirt.

Mild tail damage:

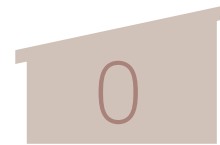
Not reported in this update (for definition, please see Real Welfare Baseline Report: 2013–2016 pork.ahdb.org.uk/media/273110/real-welfare-report-2017.pdf)

4,332,205

non-hospitalised pigs were assessed for severe tail damage



On average, 11 out of 10,000 pigs had severe tail damage



More than 75% of farms had no pigs with severe tail damage

24%

At least 24% of pigs had undocked tails

71%

71% of pigs had their tails docked

5%

The remaining 5% of pigs were kept in pens with mixed tail lengths

4

Body marks

Scope:

This measure is assessed on a sample of pigs, in a representative number of pens, excluding those pens designated as 'hospital pens'. Recording of mild body marks is optional (since November 2013), and not reported in this update.

Severe body marks:

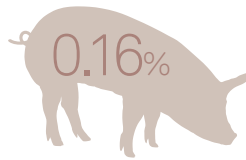
Recorded as severe if a mark is larger than 5x5 cm diameter, if the mark extends into deeper layers of the skin or if marks over a large percentage (>25%) of the skin. If a pig has both mild and severe body marks, it is recorded as severe only.

Mild body marks:

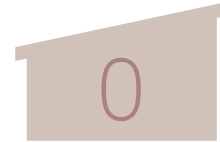
Not reported in this update (for definition, please see Real Welfare Baseline Report: 2013–2016 pork.ahdb.org.uk/media/273110/real-welfare-report-2017.pdf)

4,332,205

non-hospitalised pigs were assessed for severe body marks



On average,
16 out of 10,000
pigs had severe
body marks



More than 75%
of farms had no
pigs with severe
body marks

5

Environmental enrichment

Scope:

This measure is assessed on all pigs in a representative number of pens, excluding those pens designated as 'hospital pens'. This measure has been optional since October 2013.

Definition:

Type of environmental enrichment

The type of environmental enrichment was reported as substrate ('straw' or 'other substrate') and/or object ('chain', 'plastic' or 'other object'). The quantity of straw was further classified as restricted, low, medium or deep. Where no enrichment was seen on farm at the time of assessment, it was recorded as 'none seen'.

Assessment of use of environmental enrichment

The enrichment use is expressed as a ratio and is calculated as:

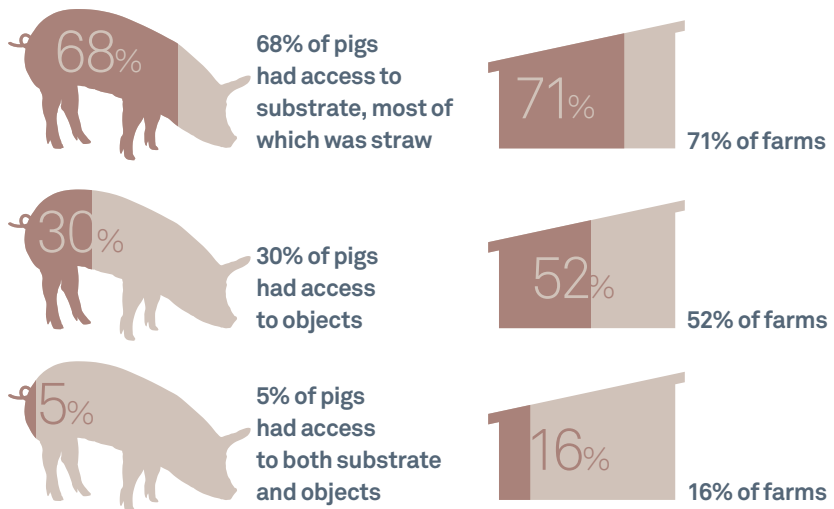
$$\frac{A}{A+B}$$

Where:

A = Number of standing or sitting pigs investigating a manipulable material, i.e. substrate or toy provided as enrichment.

B = Number of standing or sitting pigs manipulating other pigs, pen fittings, pen floor or muck. Include if the snout/mouth is in contact with any part of another pig.

The average enrichment ratio per pen was 0.51*

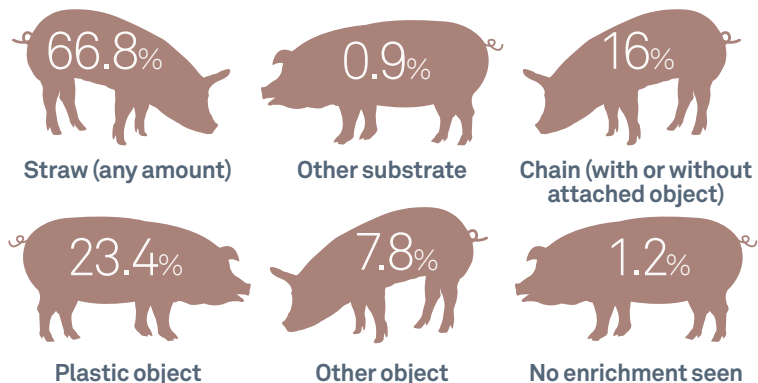


(This excludes assessments where no enrichment was recorded on the assessment form)

*Enrichment ratio explained

Any value over 0.5 suggests that pigs are displaying a preference to use the enrichments provided; 0.5 indicates the provided enrichments are equal in preference to pen mates or pen fittings, so there is scope for improvement in providing enrichments; values below 0.5 suggest the pigs are displaying a preference to investigate other pen mates or fittings, and so consideration may need to be given to introducing more effective enrichment materials.

Percentage of pigs that had access to at least one of the following (based on a sub-sample of pigs):



Making progress



Trends

Compared with 2013, a significant decrease in the proportion of lame pigs and pigs requiring hospitalisation was observed in each of the following years. A significant decrease in the proportion of pigs with severe body marks was observed in 2015 onwards, compared with 2013. This suggests a progressive decrease in the proportion of pigs not already receiving treatment in a hospital pen requiring hospitalization, pigs with lameness and pigs with severe body marks over time.

Compared with 2013, a significant increase of the proportion of pigs with severe tail lesions was observed in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. However, compared with 2014, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of pigs with severe tail lesions in the years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Compared with 2013, no improvement of the enrichment use ratio was identified in 2014, but further improvements were identified in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Compared with 2013, the proportion of pens with substrates and with objects tended to increase.



Seasonal variation

A seasonal effect was identified for the prevalence of four of the welfare outcomes, with a trend of higher percentages in autumn. The proportion of pigs that would benefit from being in a hospital pen was significantly higher in autumn, compared with spring. The proportion of lame pigs was considerably higher in autumn, compared with spring, summer and winter. The proportion of severe tail lesions was significantly higher in autumn compared with summer and winter. Compared with autumn, a substantial decrease in the enrichment use ratio was observed in spring and summer. However, no significant differences were observed between seasons for severe body marks.

Conclusion



The objective of this report was to assess the welfare of pigs in commercial pig finishing enterprises in the UK (excluding hospital pens) through five animal-based measures and to assess the changes over time and season of these measures. The report also assessed the percentage of pens and farms with enrichment and tail-docked pigs.

The mean prevalence of the different welfare outcomes was very low. The lowest percentage was for pigs requiring hospitalisation, and the highest percentage for severe body marks. While the percentage of pigs with a welfare issue could be high in individual pens, the maximum value of the percentage of pigs with welfare issues for the annual rolling average at farm level was much lower. This confirms that welfare issues remain uncommon.

All four welfare outcomes referring to lesions or sickness in the mainstream herd (excluding hospital pens) decreased over years. While the percentage of pigs requiring hospitalisation, and lame pigs, progressively decreased since 2013, a peak was observed in 2014 for the percentage of severe tail lesions and severe body marks, but this percentage further declined in the subsequent years. As the pigs in hospital pens are not included in the database, the decline might be the result either of a general reduction in the prevalence of the various welfare outcomes in the entire herd or a better management of sick/injured pigs that have been moved to hospital pens.

This assessment of Real Welfare outcomes shows the scheme provides a positive impact, especially in providing good support to decrease lameness and improve hospital pen management. Although the other welfare outcomes may be influenced by alternative environmental factors, Real Welfare outcomes suggest that the monitoring of these welfare indicators is worthwhile and can help producers and vets monitor and respond to trends on farm. It is known that benchmarking of health and welfare measures can lead to greater awareness and motivation to improve. Further work is required on farms to positively influence the prevalence of these welfare outcomes. The Real Welfare Scheme continues to build a large dataset that will not only allow the British pig industry to make further progress in this area, but provides an industry-unified system in demonstrating welfare standards to consumers and retailers.

