

Tail and ear necrosis in piglets of sows with increased weight loss during the suckling period

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A farm, which belonged to a Swiss sow pool system, reported an increased number of cases of necrosis on the base of the tail or ears in their piglets. Therefore, herd examination was performed in February 2021, and it was found that about half of all examined litters included piglets with necrosis of different locations. The sows of these piglets apparently were thinner than sows with unaffected piglets. Upon instruction, the farmer subsequently documented the body condition score (BCS) and sows' weight before farrowing and after weaning, and the number of liveborn piglets affected by necrosis of the tail or ear of the next four farrowing batches. In total, data of 97 sows and 1214 liveborn piglets were evaluated. Sows were retrospectively allocated into two groups: Those with piglets with ear and/or tail necrosis (NE), and those without (WN). Of the 97 litters, 40 included piglets with necrosis, with 28 of them having piglets only with tail necrosis, 8 only with ear necrosis, and 4 litters included piglets with both types of necrosis. Sows in group NE lost significantly more weight and BCS points during the suckling period than sows of group WN, with a tendency of having a lower BCS after weaning (2,0 vs. 2,25/5,0). Blood samples of five sows were analyzed and tested positive for the *Fusarium* mycotoxin deoxynivalenol (DON). It was hypothesized that the sows previously consumed feed contaminated with DON, which was then stored in their fat tissue, and released again into the blood stream during increased weight loss. Since DON can be transferred from the sow to her piglets during gestation or lactation, this release might have affected the piglets, leading to tail or ear necrosis. However, causative studies are needed to confirm this hypothesis.

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