

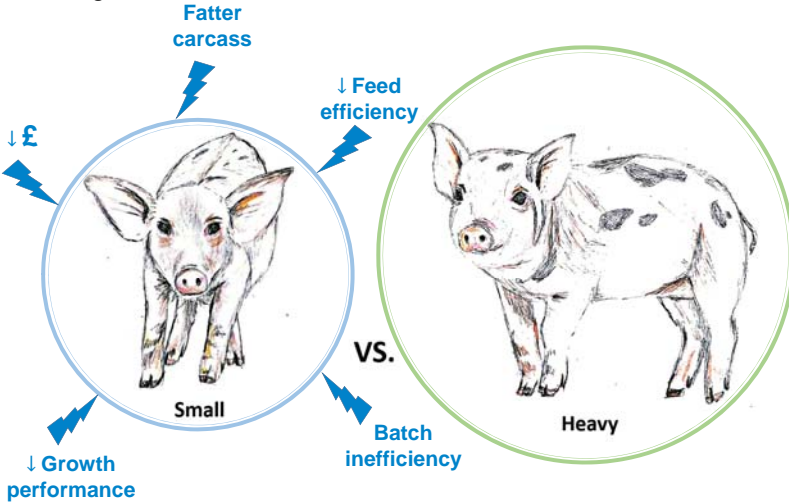
Management strategies to improve the performance of small piglets

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The problem with small piglets

The improved sow fertility has decreased the mean birth weight, increased the variability within litter and concomitantly increased the proportion of piglets born light.



Management strategies during lactation

Cross fostering

- Creating uniform litters with less weight variability, reducing competition for teat accessibility and stimulation. The latter especially favours small piglets.

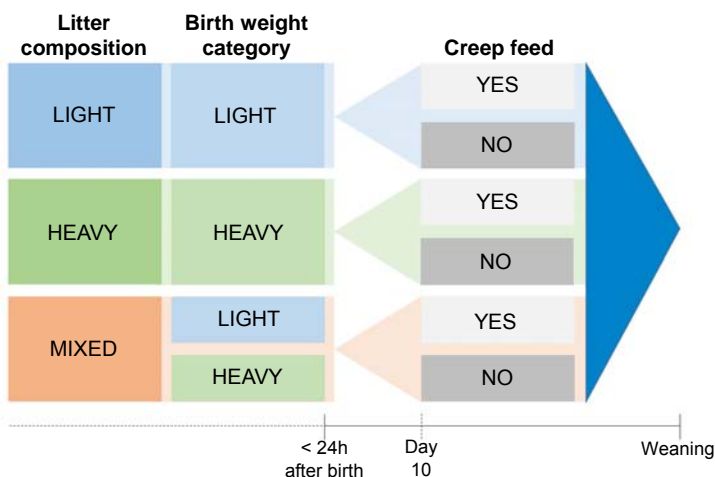
Creep feed supplementation

- Additional nutrient source when milk becomes limited and improves the transition from sow milk to solid feed.

Aim

The effect of cross fostering and creep feed provision on the performance of small and heavy piglets.

Experimental design



- The experiment followed a 3 x 2 factorial design with 7 replicates. Treatments involved three different litter compositions and creep feed supplementation
- Piglets were weaned at approximately day 28.

First results

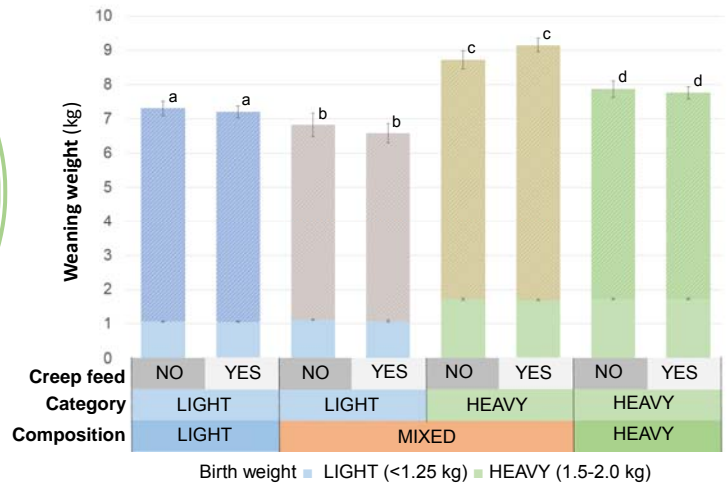


Figure 1. Effect of litter composition and creep feed supplementation on pre-weaning performance mean \pm sem

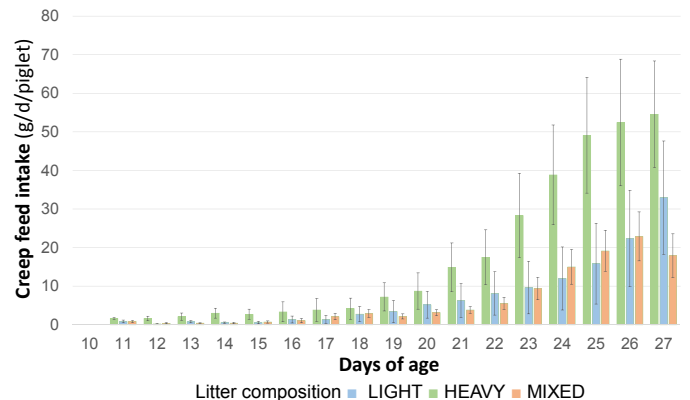


Figure 2. Daily creep feed consumption mean \pm sem

Conclusions

- Piglets that are born small perform better in uniform litters. However, piglets that are born heavy perform better in mixed litters
- Creep feed supplementation does not contribute to an improved performance pre-weaning
- Creep feed consumption is highly variable both between and within litters.

References: Kuller et al., 2007 J. Anim. Sci., 85, 1295-1301; Milligan et al., 2002 Livest. Prod. Sci., 76, 181-191