

Assessment of the daily distribution of oral stereotypic behaviour of group housed pregnant sows sequentially fed by an electronic sow feeder station.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Netherlands, a shift takes place from individually housed pregnant sows to group housing for reasons of legislation and consumers demands. Two Dutch research stations have established a protocol to record the behaviour of sows in a repeatable way. However, this protocol is based on gilts in individual housing and feeding at one time. The goal of the present study was to develop a protocol for recording behaviour of group housed pregnant sows, sequentially fed by an electronic sow feeder station (ESFS) and to assess the time of the day on which most stereotypes can be recorded.

AIM

The goal of the present study was to develop a protocol for recording behaviour of group housed pregnant sows, sequentially fed by an electronic sow feeder station (ESFS) and to assess the time of the day on which most stereotypes can be recorded.

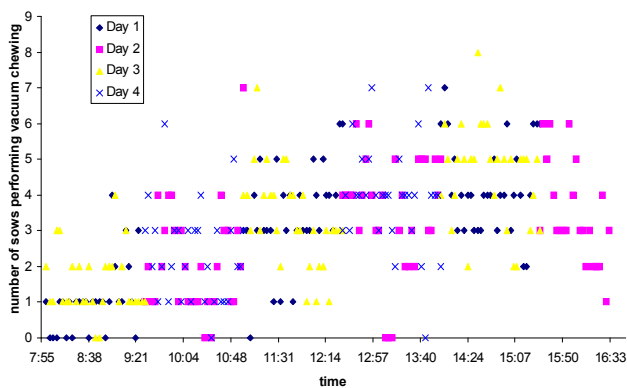


Fig 1 : vacuum chewing of sows in relation to the time

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The behaviour of sows in two stable groups of each 14 pregnant sows and gilts, sequentially fed by an ESFS, was recorded for four days using a time sampling technique (every 3 minutes). Recorded were activity (stand, sit, walk, in ESFS) and oral behaviour (passive, vacuum chewing, root, other behaviour). Sows had access to the ESFS from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

RESULTS

The percentage of sows that performed vacuum chewing increased from 10 to 30 % in the course of the day (Fig.1). There is an increase in the occurrence of vacuum chewing after sows have been visiting the ESFS (Fig. 2). The sequence in which sows entered the ESFS was more or less constant and sequence number had a negative relationship with parity ($R_s = -0,71$, $P < 0,01$). It was concluded that, for the system used, this protocol is suitable and that the end of the afternoon is the optimal period to record oral stereotypes.

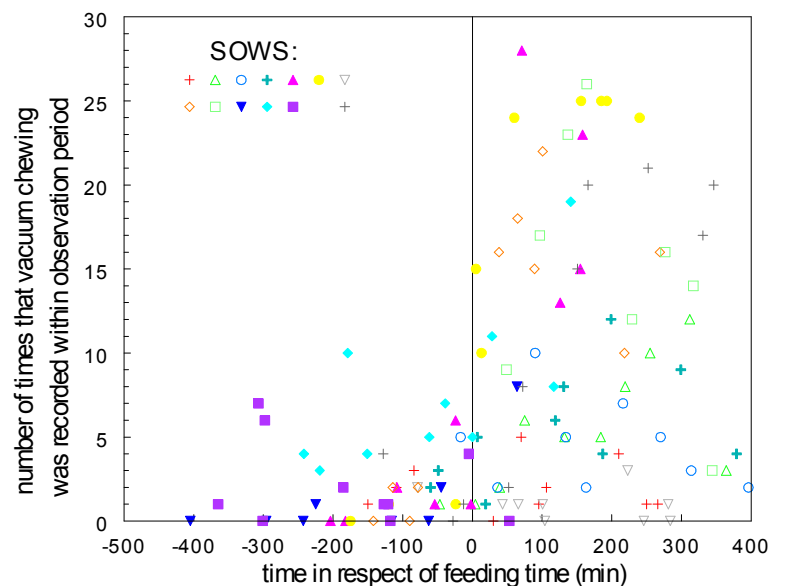


Fig 2: vacuum chewing of sows in relation to the time of feeding

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that, for the system used, this protocol is suitable and that the end of the afternoon is the optimal period to record oral stereotypes.