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Does animal health and welfare of organic pigs differ between husbandry systems?

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During the CoreOrganicII ProPIG, animal health & welfare (AHW) of organic pigs in 3 husbandry systems (8 countries) was compared: indoor with outside run (IN: n=34 farms), outdoor on pasture (OUT: n=12) and partly outdoor with at least one age group on pasture (POUT: n=28). The hypothesis was that all systems can deliver good welfare when well managed. 7 trained observers assessed pregnant sows (SO), weaners (WE) and fatteners (FA) using animal-based parameters. Non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests were used, if $P < 0.05$ pairwise testing (Wilcoxon rank sum; Bonferroni corrected) was performed with $P < 0.05$. Across systems, the median prevalence of several AHW areas was 0% (shoulder lesions SO; ectoparasites SO, FA; tail lesions, lameness WE; runts FA). No differences between husbandry systems in the prevalence of vulva deformation in SO (10.7%, 3.0%, 8.7%); short tails in WE (0%, 0.5%, 2.2%) or FA (1.8%, 2.3%, 6.5%) were found. OUT had lower prevalence of respiratory problems in WE and FA (both 0% OUT, >60% POUT, IN). Signs of diarrhoea in WE were less frequent in OUT (0%) than in IN (25.0%) and diarrhoea in FA was less frequent in OUT than in POUT and IN (0%, 0%, 8.3%). OUT had fewer lame SO than POUT and IN (0%, 3.4%, 7.1%). Across systems, prevalences of most AHW areas but respiratory problems in IN and POUT and diarrhoea in IN were low. Beyond that, OUT appeared to be beneficial with regard to several areas of AHW, which could be explained by the environmental conditions, e.g. respiratory problems (air quality), diarrhoea (exposure to faeces) and lameness (flooring). POUT farms in most cases kept SO outdoors and WE and FA similar to IN farms, and this was reflected in the results. It can be concluded, that systems do differ regarding AHW and development of organic husbandry systems across Europe should take this into account.