1B-101- *Novel Strategies to enhance creep attractiveness and reduce piglet mortality*

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Aims and Objectives

This project investigated three novel strategies hypothesised to enhance creep attractiveness to piglets, and by so doing encouraging piglets into these areas and reducing the chance of crushing in the early days of life. These strategies include maternal applied scents, the use of sound and the use of temperature gradients. Studies used a preference testing methodology to determine piglet preference for three creep areas arranged radially in a test arena over an observation period of 1 hour on each of days 3, 7, 10 and 14 of lactation. It was hypothesised that piglets would spend the majority of the observation time in an area with their dam's scent, with sounds of the maternal pig and in a location with the greatest heat. These hypotheses were tested in three different pilot trials each using four litters of pigs, replicated over the 4 time periods.

Key Findings

The results show that there is no one strategy that is convincingly preferred by the piglets above others. In general results showed high variability, and the central or control locations also found favour with piglets on several occasions.
The preference testing model that was used in this Project may be refined and improved if conducted with an improved design and under more controlled environmental conditions.

Application to Industry

None of the strategies that were investigated in this Project show potential as a strategy to keep piglets away from the sow in low confinement or group housing systems during lactation.