Australian Government
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
Business Cooperative Research Centres Programme
Pork CRC
CRC for High Integrity Australian Pork

Project Number & Title *1A-112 Commercial evaluation of lactational oestrus*

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Aims and Objectives

Mating during lactation can increase weaning age, produce piglets that are more viable post-weaning and eliminate mating stations. For this system to be viable in a conventional farrowing system, 85% of sows need to be mated during lactation with subsequent reproduction as good as that achieved in a conventional mating system, where sows are mated after weaning.

This study used criteria developed through various Pork CRC HIAP supported trials to investigate the production outcomes of a lactational oestrus induction protocol (intermittent suckling and boar exposure) employed for a full 12-month period. The objective of the study was to assess outcomes, in terms of subsequent reproduction, between sows that responded to the induction protocol (mated during lactation) and those that did not (mated after weaning) were compared.

Key Findings

- 40% of sows responded to the protocol and were mated in lactation.
- Sows mated during lactation (responders) had a significantly lower farrowing rate compared to sows mated after weaning (non-responders) (78 vs 88%).
- The number of sows responding to the stimulation protocol dropped during the summer period and those that were mated had a lower farrowing rate and born alive.

Sows mated during lactation outside the summer period performed similarly to those mated after weaning.

Application to Industry

- Not feasible in a conventional farrowing crate system year round.
- However, a mating in lactation protocol has potential as a management tool employed during periods when an in increase in stale sows (and thus an increase in non-productive days) occurs due to higher incidences of spontaneous lactational oestrus.
- May also be beneficial in systems where the motivation is to reduce the overall confinement of the sow.