



**Project Number & Title 1B-105: *EFFECTS OF MULTI-SUCKLING ON PIGLET WELFARE AND PERFORMANCE PRE- AND POST-WEANING***

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**Aims and Objectives:** The objectives were to investigate the effects grouping sows and their litters 13 days before weaning (at 28 days) on sow and piglet welfare and performance in comparison to sows and litters which remained in farrowing crate to weaning. 196 primiparous sows were used in the study. Forty-seven were housed in farrowing crates and 141 were housed in groups of three with their litters commencing 13 days before weaning.

**Key Findings:** Grouping sows and their litters (groups of three) adversely affected sow and piglet welfare between mixing and weaning and piglet welfare during lactation and performance to and subsequent to weaning. Sows and piglets kept in groups during lactation suffered significantly more scratches/injury than those in farrowing crates. Piglets reared in farrowing crates exhibited significantly higher scratch score seven days after weaning than their group-reared counterparts.

**Application to Industry**

The results suggest that grouping sows and litters in an attempt to reduce the time they are confined in lactation has negative effects on sow or piglet welfare and reduces the number of piglets weaned because of higher mortality and removals and piglet performance to weaning which persists for at least 30 days after weaning.