

R&D Snapshot

The effects of group housing during gestation on sow welfare and reproduction

Investigator: Prof Paul Hemsworth, University of Melbourne

Purpose:

- Provide advice to industry relating to space allowance and stocking rates for group housed sows
- Determine effects of housing sows in groups mixed at different times and with or without feeding stalls.

Take home messages:

- Floor space of 1.4m²/sow is insufficient
- Group size from 10-80 does not affect reproduction, aggression or stress physiology
- A barrier between feeding sows will reduce aggression and stress at feeding.
- Other ways to reduce aggression and stress include:
 - Train staff in appropriate observation and handling behaviours, ie. ProHand®
 - High level of observation at mixing
 - Use mixing pens
 - Be careful of space at mixing
 - Maintain small, static groups if possible.

Additional information:

- Full Report, Fact Sheet and Presentation
- Contact Dr Pat Mitchell at pat.mitchell@australianpork.com.au or 03 5488 2306.

