

Potential risk factors for piglet mortality in Danish organic pig production



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An on-going large scale study in nine medium-large sized Danish organic pig herds during one year from June 2014 until June 2015.

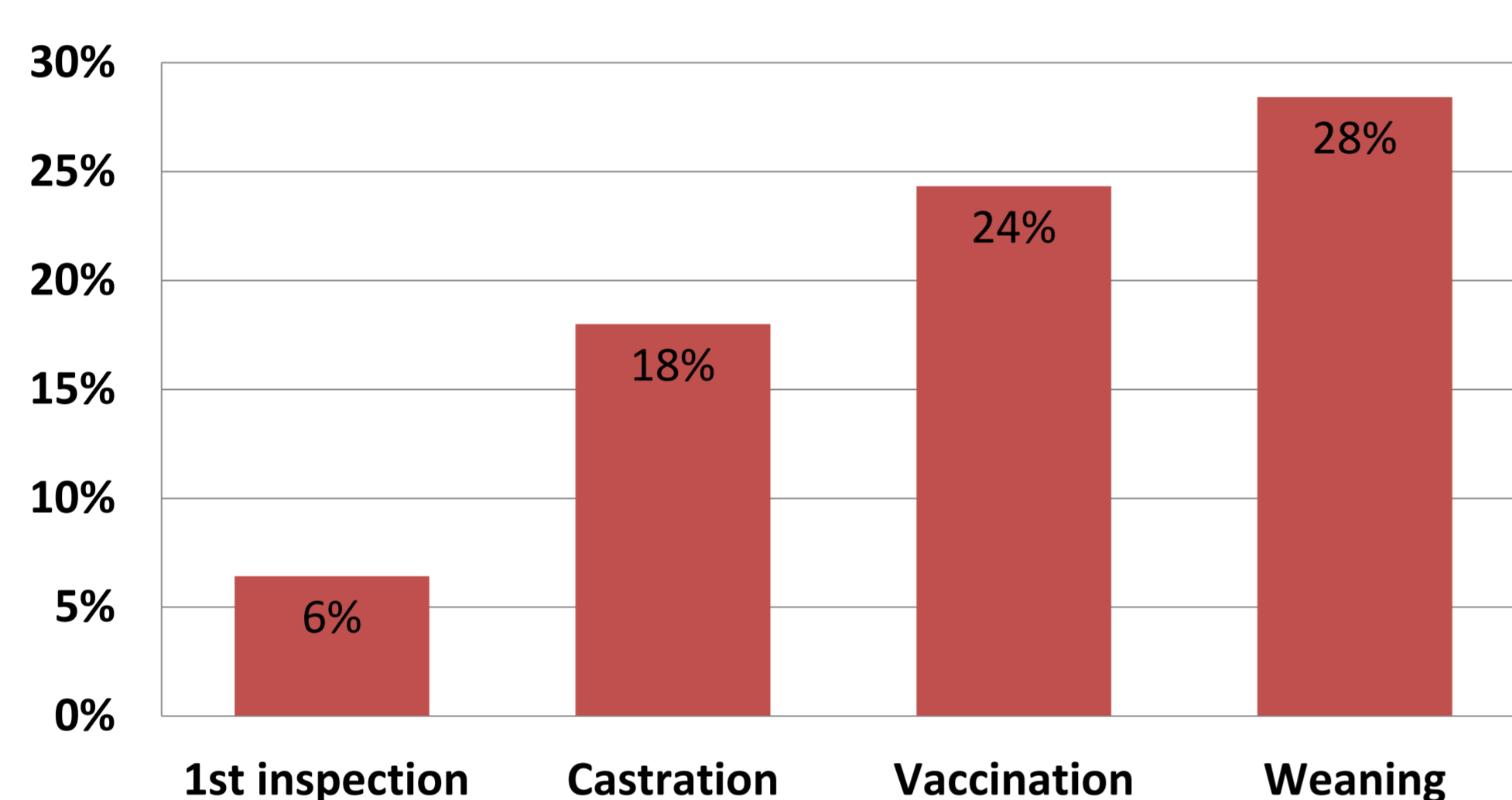
Detailed mortality registrations on 6000 farrowings

Necropsies of 4000 piglets

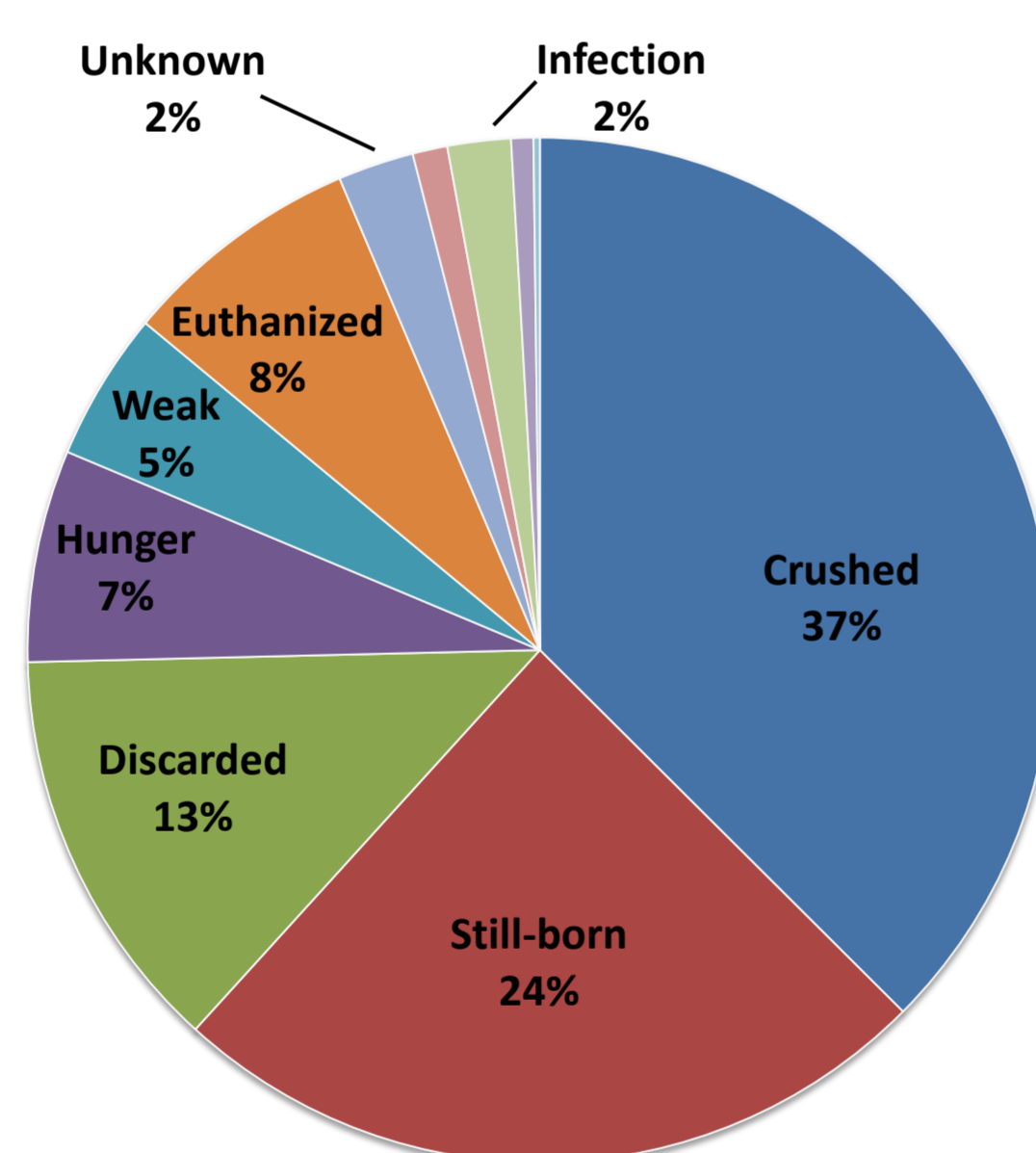
Background

Piglet mortality in Danish organic pig production is very high which is seen as a key constraint for organic pig production in achieving its potential, since consumers expect a high level of animal welfare in organic livestock production.

Preliminary results - Summer 2014



Accumulated mortality of live-born piglets from seven herds during the summer of 2014. Individual herd level preweaning mortality ranged from 22% to 38%.



Proportions of the causes of death in 1001 piglets collected on the nine herds during the summer of 2014. Discarded piglets were too decomposed to determine the cause of death.

Aim

The aim of this study is to identify the major risk factors for piglet mortality in Danish organic pig production. Herd level risk factors as well as sow level risk factors (parity, health status, nursing sows, litter size and piglet birth weight) and their interaction with season will be investigated.

Methods

Piglet mortality registrations

Detailed registrations of number of total born, dead and weaned piglets as well as parity, body condition, health status of the sows and number of cross fostered piglets are being conducted throughout a one year period.

Piglet necropsies

Necropsies are being performed to establish the cause of death and the true proportion of stillborn on a random sample of piglets collected from 25 sows from each herd in all four seasons. The piglets are kept frozen and necropsied at the farms.

Perspectives

Being the first large scale study investigating the risk factors for piglet mortality in Danish organics herds the project will provide extended new knowledge about the factors affecting the piglet mortality and will help pinpoint which strategies that potentially can reduce the level of mortality.

