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TAIL BITING: PREVALENCE AMONG DOCKED AND UNDOCKED PIGS FROM WEANING TO SLAUGHTER

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CONCLUSIONS

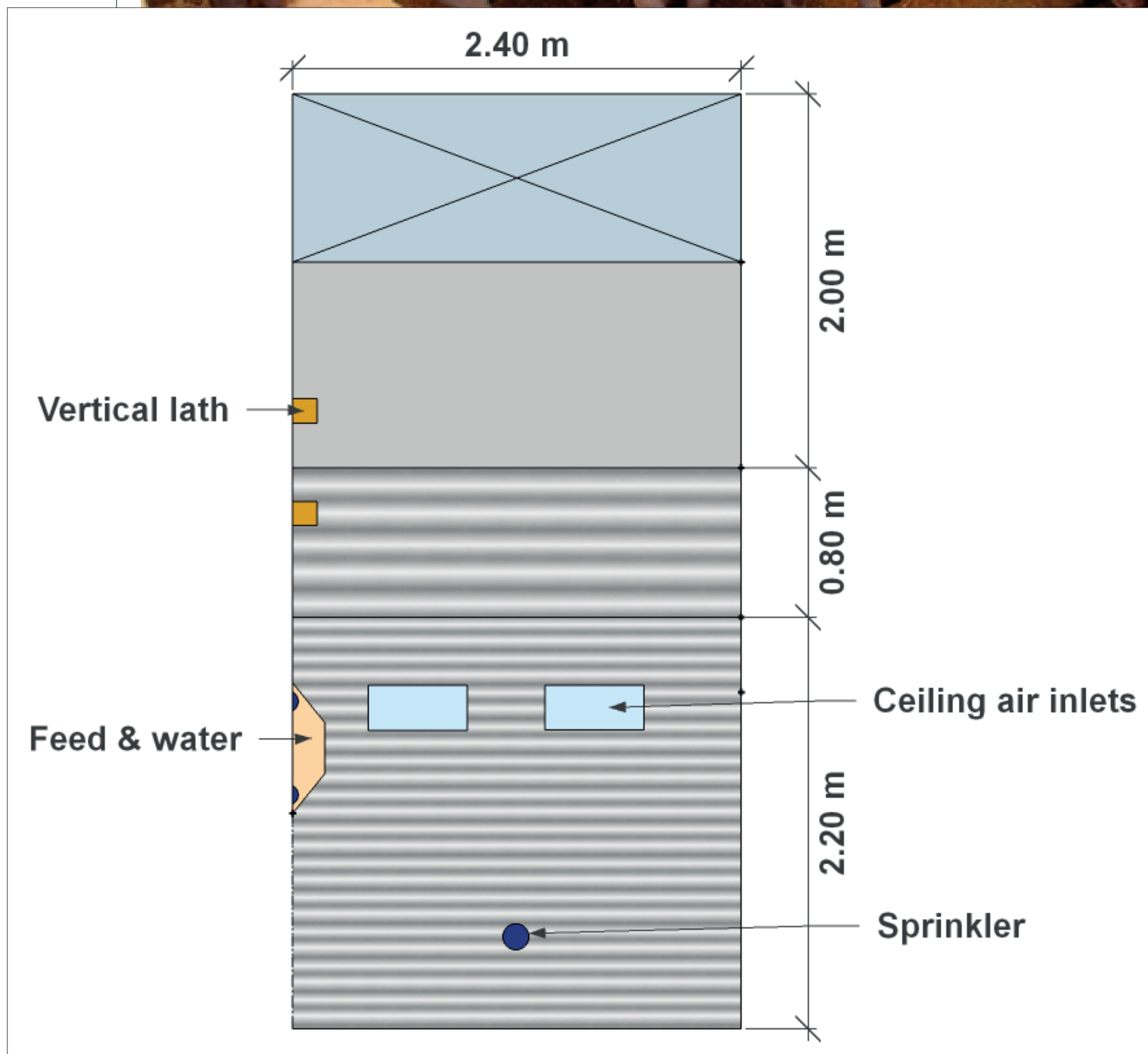
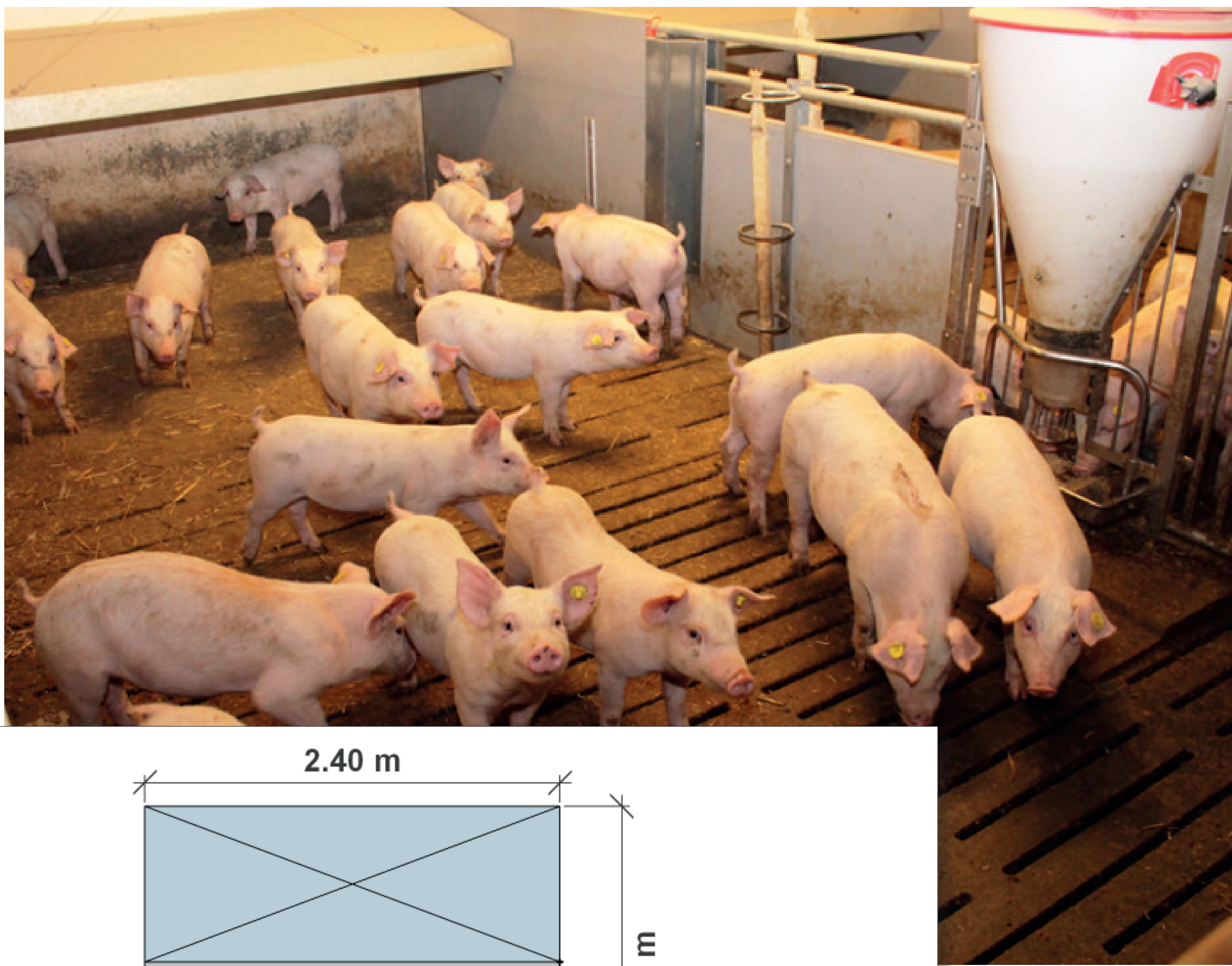
- Despite more tailbiting in undocked pigs mortality is not expected to be higher than for tailedocked pigs, but more hospital pens may be needed
- Fewer pigs got tail bitten towards the end of the finisher period
- Abattoir tail biting remarks likely highly underestimate the number of bitten pigs.

Introduction

A first step towards a cessation of tail docking is to investigate the consequences of housing undocked pigs in well-managed conventional herds. According to already known risk factors, it is expected that the risk of tail biting will be lower in these herds.

Objective

Compare tail biting prevalence between **docked** and **undocked** pigs, both during rearing and at slaughter.



PEN DESIGN

Materials and Methods

Animals and housing

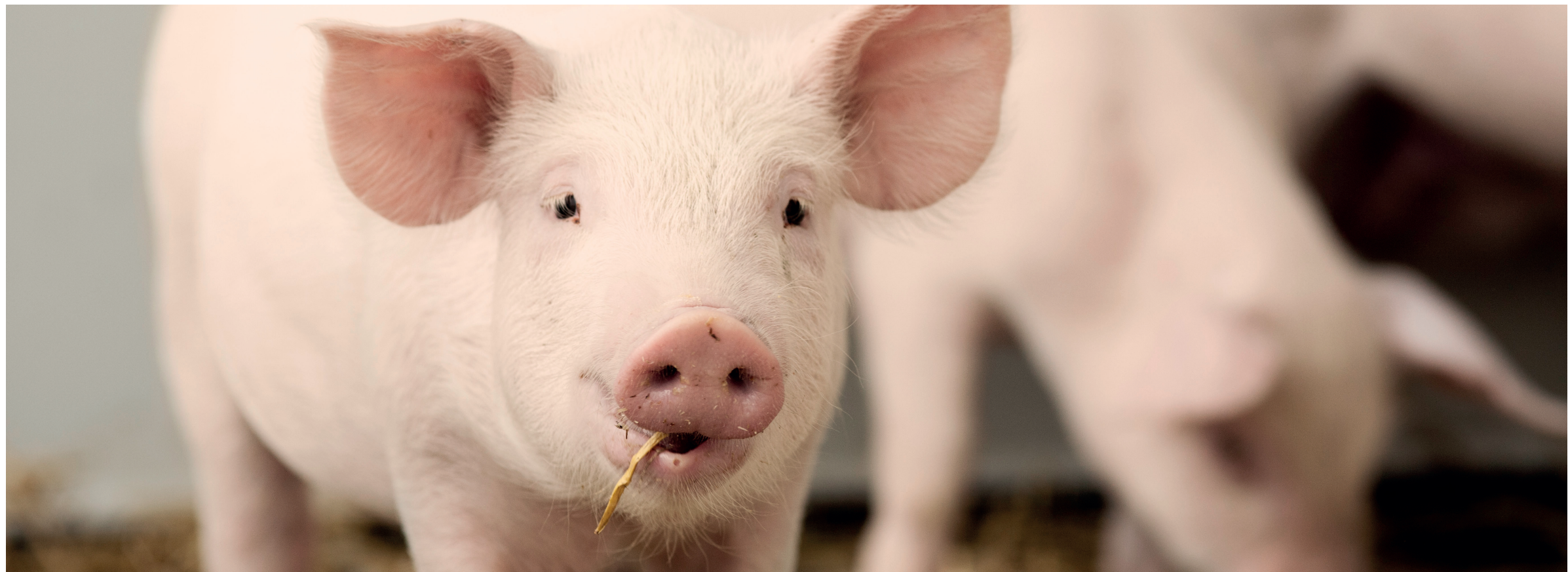
A total of 1,927 DanAvl Duroc × (Landrace × Large White) pigs were housed in pens with 20-22 pigs/pen from weaning (4 weeks of age) until slaughter. In each batch half the pigs were left undocked and the other half were docked. Straw was provided daily, 10 g per pig per day.

Experimental design

Pigs were divided into two groups:

- **CONTROL** – Tail docked pigs (48 pens)
- **TREATMENT** – Undocked pigs (47 pens)

Every second week injured tails, either bleeding or with a scab, were recorded. Dead pigs and pigs moved to hospital pens were noted continuously. In addition, tail biting remarks were collected during standard meat inspection at the abattoir.



Straw was provided daily

Results

- No tail lesions were observed among tail docked pigs
- 22% of the undocked pigs got a tail lesion
- No difference in mortality between docked and undocked pigs
- More undocked pigs were moved to hospital pens ($t=2.36$; $P<0.05$)
- Generally, most tail lesions healed before slaughter (data not shown)
- 2% of the undocked pigs and 0.32 % of the tail docked pigs got a tail biting remark at the abattoir ($\chi^2=11.2$; $P<0.001$)

TABLE 1. TAIL LESIONS AMONG PIGS WITH UNDOCKED TAILS IN THREE WEIGHT INTERVALS PRESENTED AT PIG LEVEL AND PEN LEVEL

	7-30 kg		30-60 kg		60-90 kg	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI
Tail lesions, pig level:						
Number of pigs, n	963		933		919	
Tail lesions, % pig	4.0 ^a	2.5-6.3	5.6 ^a	3.4-9.0	0.9 ^b	0.3-2.5
Tail lesions, pen level:						
Number of pens, n	47		47		47	
Tail lesions, % pens*	12.7 ^a	8.3-18.9	34.3 ^b	25.6-44.3	11.0 ^a	6.8-17.3

^{a,b} Values within a row of different superscripts differ significantly at $P<0.05$
* Pens containing at least one pig with a tail lesion

Acknowledgements
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