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## **DO WEANERS HAVE GASTRIC ULCERS?**

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### **Background and Objectives**

Investigation of gastric ulceration (GU) are primary performed in abattoir studies of finisher pigs and slaughter sows. GU is often associated with an increased fluidity of the gastric content due to finely grounded and pelleted diets. Although weaners are normally fed pelleted diets ad libitum, little is known about the prevalence of ulceration in this age group. The purpose of this study was to investigate if healthy weaners feed pelleted diets ad libitum have GU.

### **Material & Methods**

The study consisted of 200 clinically healthy weaners from ten Danish farms with weaners fed ad libitum on finely grounded commercial diets (geometric mean diameter = 554,2 µm). In each farm, 20 weaners with an average weight of 22 kg (min-max: 12-37 kg) were randomly selected and euthanized. GU assessment was based on the Danish score system, with scoring of alterations in the pars oesophagea. A healthy stomach was scored with index 0; index 1-5 present minor to severe parakeratosis and minor to severe erosions; ulcer-index 6-8 present minor to severe ulcers, scar-index 6-8 present minor to severe scars and scar-index 9-10 present oesophageal stenosis.

### **Results**

We observed that 35.5 % of weaners had ulceration, scar or stenosis in the pars oesophagea with a large between-farm variation (min-max: 0,0%-85%). The prevalence of ulcers, scars and stenosis was; 20%, 32% and 3,5%. Minor ulcers and scars was the main observed alternation observed in this study.

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

We have demonstrated that ulceration of the pars oesophagea is present in some Danish herds with weaners fed commercial diets ad libitum. These results demonstrate that pigs can develop alterations in the pars oesophagea prior to the fattening period. The herds used in this study are considered high risk herds for GU and are not representative for all Danish herds.