

Conséquences de deux alternatives à la castration des porcs sur leur comportement en isolement et en présence d'un homme non familier

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Consequences of two alternatives to pig castration on the behavioural reactions of these pigs to isolation and to the presence of an unfamiliar human

As the castration of pigs is highly contested in Europe, rearing entire or immunocastrated males should develop. Entire males reared in stable groups seem to be more interested in the human presence than surgically castrated males, but the consequences of immunocastration on reaction to stress and the human-animal relationship are not known. We compared the behaviour of male pigs reared in stable groups of 10 and surgically castrated (CA, n=20), left entire (EN, n=20) or immunocastrated (IM, n=20). Surgical castration was performed at 5-6 days of age, and injections of Improvac® (Pfizer) at 81 and 109 days. We studied the behavioural reactions to isolation and to the presence of an unfamiliar human in an arena test at 105 days and 125 days of age. Manageability was assessed by the time taken to transfer the animals to the arena. When isolated, IM males were more active (displacements) than the other pigs, IM and EN grunted more than CA. The time needed to transfer the pigs was not influenced by the state of castration. Whatever the age, EN and IM males were more attracted by an unfamiliar human than CA males (latency of approach and contact, time spent in contact). The EN males looked less at the human than CA, IM being in-between. These results are favourable to alternatives to surgical castration in terms of the human-animal relationship in our conditions. Immunocastration had only a moderate effect on attention to the human and reactivity to isolation compared to no castration.