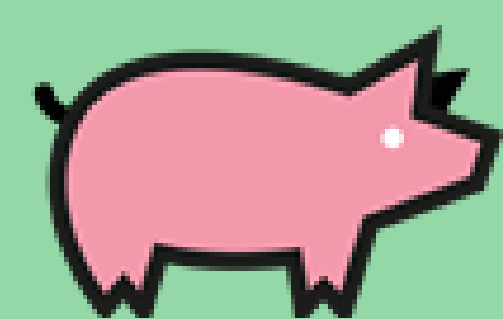


DEVELOPMENT OF A PROTOCOL FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF SOW WELFARE DURING THE FARROWING PERIOD



PORCAT
Associació Catalana
de Productors de Porcí

A SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, it has been clear that **animal welfare matters more than ever**. According to the 2023 Eurobarometer, 84% of EU citizens want stricter animal welfare regulations.

This concern led to RD 364/2023, making welfare plans mandatory. RD 346/2025 later changed this, making them a recommendation. Still, practical tools to assess animal welfare are needed.

Together with PORCAT, we **developed a complementary protocol** to help catalan farms assess and **ensure the welfare of sows** during farrowing.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the **needs of the pig farming sector** through collaboration with PORCAT
- Develop a **practical protocol** to assess sow welfare.
- Ensure the protocol is applicable on-farm and **aligned with current production systems**

THEORICAL CONTEXT

Welfare consequences:

- Restriction of movement
- Resting problems
- Group stress
- Inability to explore
- Inability to express maternal behaviour
- Heat stress
- Soft tissue lesions

Main welfare hazards:

- Insufficient space
- Poor floor quality
- Lack of enrichment
- Room temperature too high

Evaluation tools:

- Resource-Based Measures
- Animal-Based Measures

SNEAK PEEK OF THE WELFARE PROTOCOL:

	Aspect evaluated	Evaluation criterion	Scoring	Additional comments
Restriction of movement	Nest-building behavior	Presence or absence?	Yes (1) /No (0)	
	Locomotion behavior	How much time do they spend moving?	Frequently (1) /Occasionally (0.5)/ Never (0)	
	Lying behavior	Are they always lying sown?	Yes (0) / No (1)	
Resting problems	Resting position	Do they lie in a lateral position?	Yes (1) /No (0)	
	Pressure injuries	Any sings of ulcers, calluses or bursitis?	None (1) /Mild (0.5)/ Severe (0)	
Group stress	Termination of a nursing bout	Do sows interrupt suckling?	Yes (0) /No (1)	

CONCLUSIONS

- The protocol is based on EFSA-identified hazards and scientifically validated measures.
- It offers a practical tool to assess sow welfare during farrowing.
- I highly recommend this kind of project to students who want to apply their knowledge and make a real contribution.