



Assessment and incidence of skin damage in slaughter pigs

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INTRODUCTION

Skin damage indicates reduced animal welfare, and therefore assessment of the damage could be one relevant measurement to use when documenting animal welfare.

The aim of this study was

- to establish a scale by which skin damage in living pigs as well as in carcasses can be evaluated
- to investigate when the skin damage arises

MATERIALS AND METHODS

240 pigs from six different commercial herds were included. The pigs were slaughtered at two commercial Danish abattoirs (slaughtering speed: 820 pigs per hour and CO₂ stunning in groups, slaughter line speed: 410 carcasses per hour).

The pigs were handled according to the standard procedures at the farm, during transport and at the abattoir as well. Skin damage was recorded at four checkpoints: in the home pen, in the delivery facilities, after 1 hour of lairage and at the slaughter line 45 minutes after sticking.

Assessment of skin damage:

On live pigs in four regions separately; the head and ear, the front, the middle and the hind quarters.
On carcasses in three regions separately; the front, the middle and the hind quarters.

Skin damage scores:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 0 | None or a little superficial damage |
| 1 | Some superficial damage, clearly marked or up to three short (2 - 3 cm) and deep |
| 2 | Clear deep and/or long damage (> 3cm) including much superficial damage or circular areas |
| 3 | Much deep damage |

RESULTS

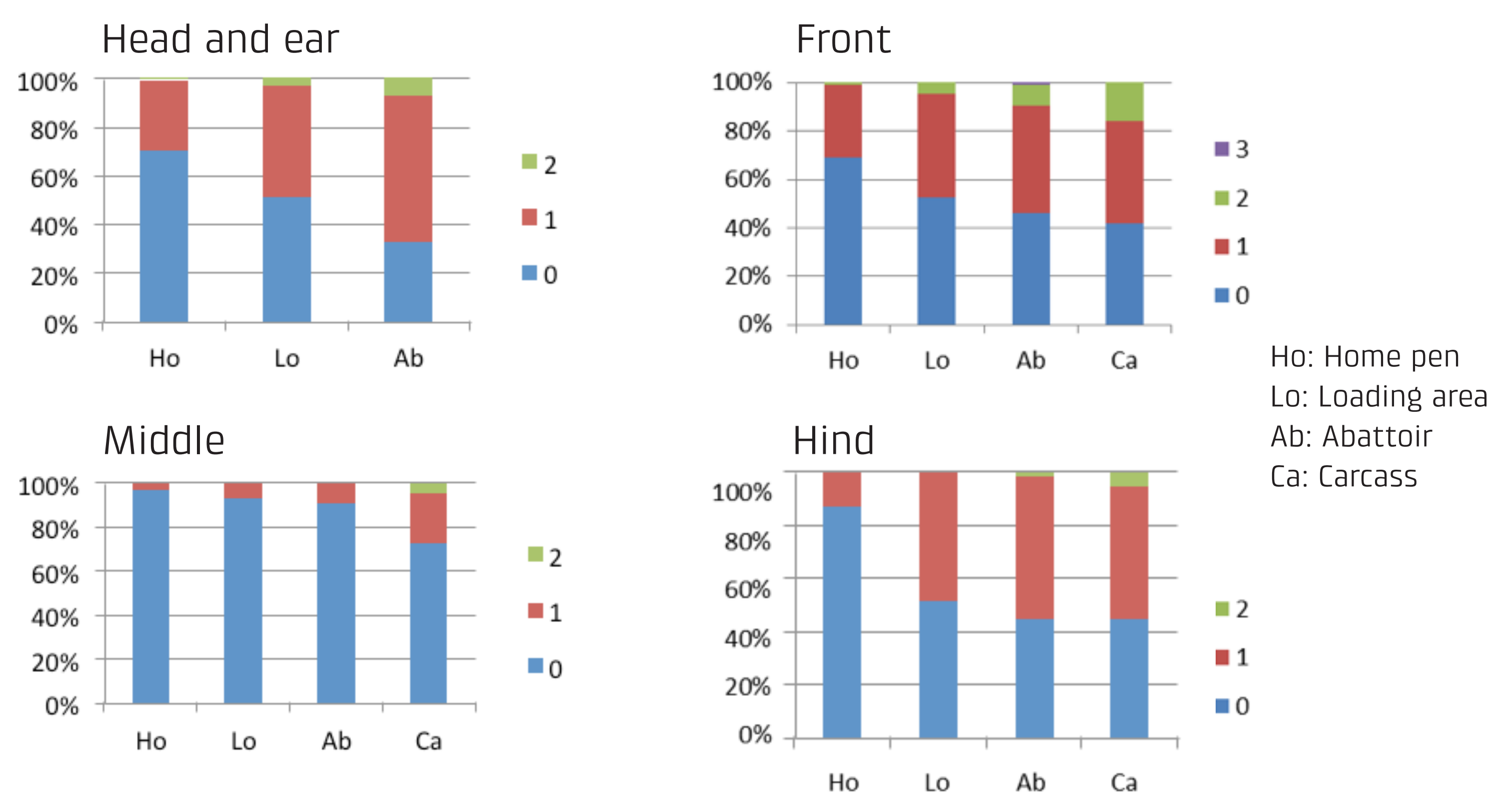
Photo of two pigs with the score 1 (left) and 2 (right) at two different checkpoints



Just before slaughter

45 min. after slaughter

INCIDENCE OF SKIN DAMAGE ON HEAD AND EAR, FRONT, MIDDLE AND HIND QUARTER



CONCLUSION

- It is possible to establish a scale for assessing skin damage on the live pig that expresses the corresponding skin damage assessed on the carcass
- The results indicate that skin damage is primarily caused by aggression
- The incidences of skin damage increase in the delivery facility and continue to increase at the abattoir
- A four point scale was used, but it can be argued that a three point scale would be more operational



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