

ANIMAL WELFARE

Title: Pattern of injury and death rates in transported early-weaned pigs: a retrospective study – NPB #03-146

Investigator: Robert Morrison

Institution: University of Minnesota

Co-Investigator: Alejandro Larriestra, John Deen,

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Abstract:

The number of weaned pigs transported per year has increased dramatically. Transport can be a welfare concern due to the risk of injury and death. There are few reports describing the pattern of the mortality rate associated with pig transportation. The objective of this study was to describe the mortality / injury incidence rate in weaned pigs during transportation and its associated risk factors, particularly, the effect of trip distance. We had data on 2,079 truckloads of weaned pigs carried out between the years 2001 and 2004. Each truckload had records on number of pigs loaded, city of departure, city of destination, date and time of departure and arrival as well as records of deaths and injuries. The affected pigs were those identified by the buyer as being unacceptable due to injuries upon arrival. The median truckload rate for dead or injured pigs per hundred pigs at risk was 0.267 % (n=2041). Quarters 2 and 3 of the year had a slightly higher rate of injuries in comparison to quarters 1 and 4, while no such trend was observed for mortality. Origin (defined as state or province), was a significant risk factor for the death/injury rates, even after the geographic distance, year, quarter of the year and size of the truckload were included in the model. Trips longer than 639 miles (the 75th percentile) experienced a 17 % higher rate. When trips were made during cold weather, the rate was lower. In addition, smaller truckloads and year were also influential in the rate. In conclusion, under the conditions studied, transportation did not pose a high risk for injuries or deaths in the population studied.

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For more information contact:

National Pork Board, P.O. Box 9114, Des Moines, Iowa USA

800-456-7675, Fax: 515-223-2646, E-Mail: porkboard@porkboard.org, Web: <http://www.porkboard.org/>