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Effect of housing system and sex on growth, carcass characteristics and meat quality of fattening rabbits

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In this study were investigated the effects of housing system (cage vs pasture pen) and sex on performances, carcass yield and meat characteristics of 96 growing mixed sex hybrid rabbits (NZW×C). Animals were housed in 12 wired cages (4 rabbits/cage) and in one open-air pasture pen (20×9m; 48 rabbits) and fed ad libitum with a commercial diet. The diet intake and live weight were controlled from 59 to 87 d of age. The intake of pasture by rabbits in the pen treatment was not registered. At day 87, 24 rabbits were slaughtered, carcass characteristics were determined and cooking loss (CL), Warner-Bratzler Shear Force (WBSF) and pHu of M. biceps femoris were measured. Data was analysed using Anova. Caged rabbits showed higher ($P<0.05$) weight gain (45.9 vs. 34.2 g/d), feed intake (163.4 vs. 110.2 g/d) and live weight (3027 vs. 2675 g). Pasture pen rabbits had higher ($P<0.05$) proportion of hind part (26.4 vs. 28.7%), similar dressing out percentage (about 60%), lower ($P<0.05$) dissectible fat percentage (1.35 vs. 4.19%) and meat/bone ratio of hind leg (4.2 vs 5.0). Pasture pen rabbits showed higher CL (3.66 vs. 2.95%) and WBSF (4.11 vs. 3.17 kg/cm²), and similar pHu 24h. Sex had no effects on parameters measured. It was concluded that the open-air system had negative effects on growth, positive effects in carcass characteristics and improved meat quality.

Session 18

Theatre I

Bovine colostrum: an efficient and cost-effective growth promoter in piglet weaning diet

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We showed previously that the incorporation of 2% of bovine colostrum whey (BCW) in piglet diet reduces the post-weaning (PW) growth check. Two experiments were conducted to reduce the costs of its use. The 1st experiment evaluated the effect of 3 doses of BCW (0 (Whey 0), 10 (Whey 1) and 20 (Whey 2) g.kg⁻¹ of a commercial diet). Each treatment was distributed to 3 pens of 13 newly weaned pigs for 28 days. In the 2nd experiment 4 pens of 12 pigs received the "Whey 2" treatment for 10 days and then the "Whey 0". Four other pens received the "Whey 0" diet for 4 weeks. In both studies, the feed ingestion and the body weight were measured. In the 1st experiment, an increase of growth performance, feed intake and feed efficiency in "Whey 1" and "Whey 2" treatments were observed the first week PW compared to the "Whey 0" treatment. However, there were no differences between the two supplemented treatments. In the 2nd experiment, the piglets receiving the "Whey 2" showed an increase in growth and feed ingestion the second week PW. Our results show that BCW is an effective growth promoter for piglets at weaning and that it is possible to reduce the costs of its use by limiting the incorporation and the duration of the treatment.