



QS-REPORT Meat and Meat Products 02/2016

Evaluation of Diagnostic Data Animal health index provides an overview

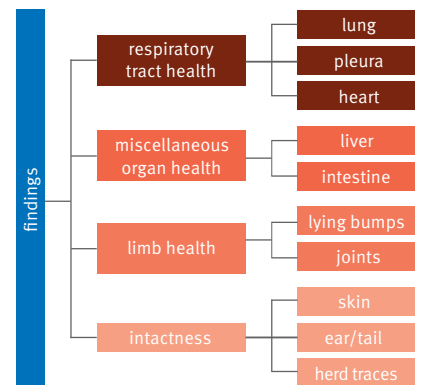
Currently more than 54 million data are available in the central diagnostic database at QS. These originate, on the one hand, from the pilot project launched in autumn of 2014, in which abattoirs report findings from official examinations of slaughter animals and meat to QS. Since 1 July 2016 the findings of abattoirs, participating in the animal welfare initiative, have been added. In order to compare data in the future and to show changes, an animal health index is to be calculated. With the financial support of the QS Science Fund, Prof. Dr. Joachim Krieter of Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel was commissioned with the assessment and evaluation of the diagnostic data and the development of an animal health index.

organ health. For evaluation purposes, the individual diagnostic criteria are assigned to one of these four groups and assessed. In doing so, only the data of one farmer relating to one single abattoir and for a defined period of time are used. When making the evaluation, the differences in the recording of findings in the various abattoirs are taken into account on the one hand while the process is structured so flexibly on the other that changes can be implemented in a timely manner (e.g. weighting, scaling, classification).

49 abattoirs are currently reporting findings to the QS diagnostic database, thus covering roughly 72 percent of all slaughtering in Germany. As other abattoirs are in the process of organising the data transfer, a gapless, comprehensive data basis should be achieved soon. Data on more than 54 million carcasses constitutes a sound basis for evaluations and model calculations on the formation of the animal health index. The validity is assessed every quarter and adapted as necessary. The development process is then to be completed by mid-2017 at the latest.

The animal health index in detail

Four sub-indices are being planned initially under the generic term animal health index: respiratory tract health, limb health, intactness and miscellaneous



The diagnostic data are evaluated on a quarterly basis and discussed with experts from science, trade and industry. The time is also used to discuss the details of the allocation of criteria to the individual groups. It also has to be clarified which players are to be given access to the data in the diagnostic database and how each individual may use this information. This applies to the livestock owners, the

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Editorial Dear Readers, Is it possible to build up a meaningful animal health index from the very different diagnostic data provided by the official slaughter animal and meat examination? In cooperation with Prof. Dr. Krieter of the University of Kiel, an animal health index is being developed which aims to satisfy this requirement. In our report, you can read all about how the index is compiled and what opportunities it opens up. An article entitled “Alternatives to the castration of piglets without anaesthetics – decision-making aids for trade and industry” also awaits you.

The editorial team would be pleased to receive questions and suggestions on the QS-Report to presse@q-s.de.



Evaluation of Diagnostic Data

Animal health index provides an overview – continued from page 1

abattoirs, the agricultural coordinators and when necessary to consultants and the responsible veterinary authorities.

Official side is following

In a work group involving national and regional authorities, a uniform concept for recording findings was developed for all of Germany and coordinated with the affected trade associations. The experiences made in the pilot projects conducted by QS to establish a diagnostic database for official findings made during the slaughter process flowed into this concept to quite a considerable extent.

Dr. Edwin Ernst, head of the national/regional work group: “Up to now, the recording of diagnostic data for pigs only involved individual findings and organic abnormalities. This meant, however, that the objectives of EU law were not fully satisfied. Utilisation of the data from meat examinations to improve animal health and wellbeing are also becoming more and more the focus of official monitoring at the abattoir. The expectations of trade and

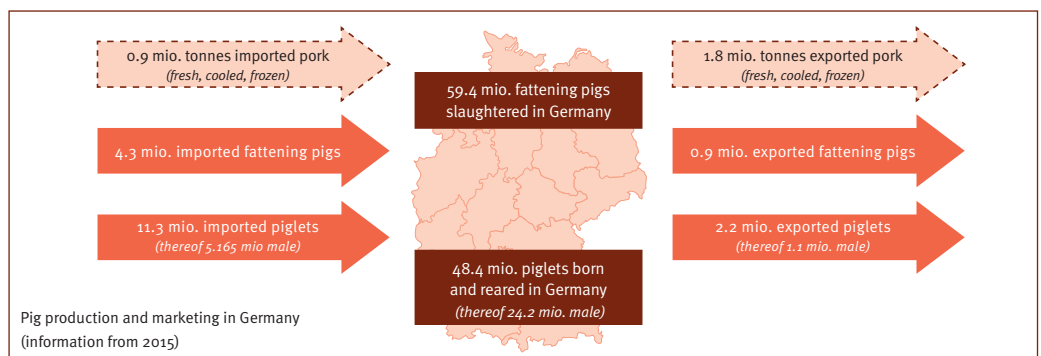
consumers have also increased considerably in recent years where these questions are concerned and we have responded to this. As far as the technical prerequisites at the abattoir permit, the new system of recording diagnostic data has been used since October this year. It is good that the industry is following the same course and that we have achieved a very high coverage rate in the recording and evaluation of diagnostic data.”

Alternatives to the Castration of Piglets without Anaesthetics

Decision-making aids for trade and industry

From 1 January 2019, it will be prohibited in Germany to castrate male piglets without using anaesthetics. This is prescribed by Animal Welfare Law and it affects roughly 24 million pigs born and reared in Germany. The alternatives are surgical castration with anaesthetics, entire male production and entire male production with vaccination (immunocastration). The entire supply chain is affected by the ban on castration without anaesthetics. To ensure that everyone involved can make sound decisions for a successful transition, all stages must look at the possible consequences as well as consumer acceptance.

Arrangements and agreements are required to ensure that the amended provisions can be implemented along the chain from 2019 with as few impediments as possible. Despite this, a significant structural change is to be expected, especially in German piglet productions, but also in the fattening and slaughtering sector. It is not yet clear which of the three alternative methods will assert itself. The coordination platform “renouncing piglet castration without anaesthesia” presented by QS triggered and advised a situation analysis of the sector. Accordingly, roughly half of pig farmers would prefer painless castration as an alternative method, 33 percent the rearing of entire males and 17 percent immunocastration. All three available methods have their advantages and disadvantages. In addition to this, each of the methods requires a high degree of reliable agreements from 2019 at the latest all



the way through to contractual obligations along the entire chain. The logistical effort and expense for the various goods flows will be commensurately high. Seasonal emphasis on the marketing of certain sub-parts poses special challenges and smaller businesses in particular won't find this easy.

Agreements with neighbouring countries desirable

Equal treatment within the QS scheme is necessary to avoid splitting the market. It is currently being discussed in the QS committees whether, due to a lack of legal regulation abroad, the German requirements for piglet castration should also be applied to piglets, porkers and pork meat delivered into the QS scheme from neighbouring countries. The QS head office has entered into discussions with its bilateral contractual partners in Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark in this regard.

Study examines consumer opinion

How do consumers react when they hear about piglet castration and the various measures? Do they have fears and worries and if yes, what are they? To answer these questions, the QS Science Fund has funded a study at the request of the coordination platform “renouncing piglet castration without anaesthesia” (see QS-Report 1/2016) in order to capture consumer opinion. The reactions of consumers to the three alternative methods and their potential to produce scandal were researched in depth-psychological interviews according to which surgical castration with anaesthetics has the

lowest potential for scandal. Entire male production meets with mixed acceptance. The avoidance of painful castration is welcomed on the one hand, but the risk of a scandal is higher on the other as the notion of brutalisation and aggression among the young males is repellent to many consumers. According to the study, immunocastration has the greatest potential for scandal. The assertion that no residues remain in the meat is not regarded as credible (catch phrase “hormone meat”).

i You will find the detailed results of the study here (only in German): www.q-s.de/studie-ferkelkastration



Delivery of Pregnant Animals for Slaughter

Latest case numbers continue on a low level



The delivery of pregnant animals for slaughter not only meets with criticism in politics and society, livestock farmers also fundamentally reject the slaughter of gravid animals and abattoirs do not want to slaughter any pregnant animals either. To sensitise agricultural businesses to the topic, the abattoirs in the QS scheme have been recording since 1 January 2015 every instance where cattle are delivered in the final third stage of their pregnancy and reporting these cases back to the livestock farmers. In addition to this, QS is considering prohibiting the delivery of pregnant animals to abattoirs in future and marketing their meat as QS produce.

Since 2013, the meat industry association "Verband der Fleischwirtschaft e.V." (VDF)

has been recording the number of cases at abattoirs where pregnancy in the final third stage was established in cows within the scope of official examinations of slaughter animals and meat. The results to date show that over the entire period, the numbers are at a low level with only approx. 0.8 percent of cows delivered for slaughter being classed as heavily pregnant. **Reinhard Schoch**, who coordinates the collection of the case numbers at the VDF, confirms: "In the course of this survey, we have received feedback on more than two thirds of all of the cattle slaughtered in Germany. The numbers are always well below one percent, a consistently low level".

In addition to this, the VDF has been collecting data on the pregnancy of slaughter pigs since June 2016. A recently conducted interim evaluation shows that approx. 0.2 percent of

the animals were in the final third stage of pregnancy when delivered to the abattoir. Reinhard Schoch of the VDF commented on this as follows: "It's good that the industry is also gathering information on the slaughter of pregnant sows because the discussion is going to spread to all livestock species. With this survey, we want to produce transparency where pigs are concerned too and reduce the slaughter numbers of heavily pregnant animals to zero if possible".

The comparatively low percentages do not alter the fact that animals in the late stages of pregnancy should fundamentally not be slaughtered. A move in this direction has also been made by a legislative initiative by the federal government which has initiated an amendment of the law on the trading ban on animal products, which would prohibit the delivery of heavily pregnant animals for slaughter. It has to be clarified whether and if yes, what exceptions would be permitted (e.g. in the case of disease prevention). There is also discussion within the QS scheme at the moment about incorporating a corresponding regulation. Where the legislative initiative is concerned, further measures should be discussed anew at the meeting of the Advisory Board for Cattle and Pigs at the beginning of 2017.

Revisions in 2017

An overview of the most important novelties

Guideline Storage of Meat and Meat Products

■ Service providers who store meat and meat products on behalf of QS scheme participants can have themselves certified in accordance with the new **guideline Storage of Meat and Meat Products**. In addition to the general requirements of the QS scheme, the most important requirements in the guideline concern compliance with hygiene and temperature requirements, as well as traceability. Participation will initially be voluntary for storage companies. After a two-year transition phase, certification in line with QS or another recognised standard will become mandatory for all storage companies commissioned by QS scheme participants from 1 January 2019.

« « « **Jan Peilnsteiner**, Managing Director of the association of German refrigerated food companies (Deutscher Kühlhäuser & Kühllogistikunternehmer e.V.) » » »

"The high legal demands on temperature-controlled logistics are further specified and described in a practical manner in the new QS guideline. This not only results in

planning security but also in legal security among the companies. In addition to this, storage companies can decide for themselves whether they want to conduct a QS audit or provide proof of successful certification, e.g. in line with IFS Logistics at QS, and use this to obtain authorisation in the QS scheme. Unnecessary double certification is avoided in this way while high quality in the storage of meat and meat products in refrigerated warehouses is guaranteed".

Salmonella monitoring

■ Only samples from the last five calendar quarters will be used for the salmonella categorisation that is undertaken in pig production businesses every quarter. The **minimum sampling period** of six months that has applied up to now will be abolished. Instead, categorisation is to be undertaken in future as soon as the prescribed sampling target has been reached.

■ Abattoirs will receive a recommendation for **salmonella sampling** for every delivery. The current option of only drawing blood samples from the existing stock is to be cancelled out by the new regulation. Samples drawn from existing stock will continue to be used for the salmonella categorisation of pig producing businesses but will not be taken into account for the calculation of the sample recommendation.

Emergency plan

■ All livestock farmers in the QS scheme must have an **emergency plan** to ensure the care of livestock in the absence of the plant manager or in the event of a power cut which shuts down the



technology required to care for the animals. As a minimum, this plan must contain the contact details of the farm veterinarian, the technical emergency service and a point of contact who is familiar with the peculiarities of the business. QS provides a supporting document which can be downloaded.

■ The requirement "Organic Fertilizers and Nutrients Comparison" is deleted from all guidelines agriculture.

Gate keeping regulation feed

■ The requirements of the Gate keeping regulation are further tightened in the Guideline **Feed Sector** (annex 10.2.). Accordingly, every lot of every non-QS-certified feed material producer must be sampled in line with the QS control plan.

i All novelties are described in detail in the **revision information** under "documents" on www.q-s.de.

Labelling of Origin

An initial assessment

Origin of the animals, place of slaughter – these indications of origin have had to be included on the labels of packaged pork and poultry meat in German shops for a good year and a half now. But how does the proper implementation of the EU regulation, which has been in effect 1 April 2015, work in actual practice?

The evaluation of 472 QS audits in the areas of slaughtering/deboning, processing and butchery shows that in the main, origin marking requirements are properly implemented. The requirements checked in the QS audit regarding origin, product labelling and traceability were met to over 93 percent without any complaints and with only 68 nonconformities (6.5 percent). “The forwarding of information on the origin of animals from the farmers to the abattoirs works well”, explains **Henning Ossendorf**, who has responsi-

bility at QS for the area of origin labelling. The indication of origin provided by the farmer is supplemented by the abattoirs to include the place of slaughter before being passed on to the downstream stages. The consumer then finds this information in consolidated form on the product label in food retail outlets. “The cross-stage QS system helps farmers and abattoirs with the correct implementation of origin labelling requirements, thus increasing transparency in the supply chain and towards the final consumer. We see confirmation of this in the audit results: the system has proven to be practicable,” Ossendorf continued.

Support in matters of origin labelling

There is still some optimisation potential in the implementation of indication of origin requirements, however. Due to the similarities and differences in the EU regulations (EU Reg. No. 1337/2013 and EC Reg. No. 1760/2000) the indications of the origin of bovine animals are often used for swine or separate variations of the labelling requirements are applied which do not conform with the regulations. As some of the rules on batch formation are not correctly implemented either, companies are being offered support in matters of origin labelling from QS



head office and ORGAINVENT. In addition to tips and forms for documentation, ORGAINVENT offers to check labels and other documents for conformity with legal requirements and gives advice on the use of additional, voluntary details.

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News in brief

Random sample audits in Germany and abroad in 2016

Unannounced random sample audits were conducted throughout the entire QS scheme in the period from August to November 2016. In the total of 360 random sample audits commissioned by QS, a closer look is also taken at 41 businesses in neighbouring European countries, including 22 with bilateral agreements which give them eligibility to deliver into the QS scheme. The goal of these foreign random sample audits is to check that the systems recognised via bilateral agreements function properly while simultaneously emphasising the constructive collaboration of the standard owners involved. The audits are conducted by QS special purpose auditors accompanied by employees of each respective standard owner.

Animal welfare initiative for pigs: draft programme for 2018-2020 presented

The partners from agriculture, the meat industry and the food retail sector have reached an agreement on a joint draft programme for the continuation of the animal welfare initiative for pigs from 2018 to 2020. The following cornerstones were laid down here: top-up of funding by 35 million euros to 100 million euros per year, whereby considerably more pig farming businesses will be able to participate in the initiative in future. Apart from this, the draft programme contains more standardised provisions, such as more space and additional manipulable organic material for the animals. An animal health/animal welfare index is to be introduced and expanded.

Status report on antibiotics monitoring confirms that the industry has achieved a lot

The results of the last five years in QS antibiotics monitoring are really impressive: over 2,300 veterinarians enter data on the administration of antibiotics into the QS antibiotics database. Evidence of more than 2.1 million treatments has been recorded and evaluated to data. The industry has achieved a lot since 2012 with its self-initiative to record and evaluate the quantities of antibiotics used in livestock farming. Transparency was created for the sector along with tangible comparison opportunities for livestock farmers and veterinarians. There has been a significant reduction in the use of antibiotics in livestock farming. Last year alone, there was a 21.5 percent reduction (from 697 to 547 tonnes) in the amount of antibiotics administered in pig and poultry farming businesses in the QS scheme. The “Status Report on QS Antibiotics Monitoring”, which QS published in September, provides an overview of the results achieved since data were first collected. You will find it on www.q-s.de/presse-newsroom (only in German).

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