

Effects of housing of entire male pigs on performance, carcass characteristics and meat quality

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In a previous study, we reported that ADG of group-penned entire male pigs (EM) was lower than castrates (774 vs. 830 g/d) and ADFI was low (< 2 kg/d). The objective of this study was to compare growth performance, carcass characteristics and meat quality traits of the LM of group- (GP) and individually (IP) penned EM. After weaning, 24 EM were blocked by BW (2 littermates/block) and assigned to 2 housing conditions: GP and IP. From 27 to 107 kg BW, pigs had ad libitum access to standard diets. BW and individual feed intake were determined weekly. Data were analysed by the MIXED procedure of SAS. Means were separated with LSD ($P < 0.05$). The ADG did not ($P > 0.05$) differ among treatments. However, IP consumed more feed than GP (2.24 vs. 2.05 kg/d; $P < 0.01$) and were less efficient (2.52 vs. 2.33 kg/kg; $P < 0.01$). Carcasses of GP tended to have a higher percentage of valuable cuts compared to IP (57.4 vs. 56.4; $P = 0.09$). Initial and ultimate pH as well as drip loss percentage of the LM did not ($P \geq 0.16$) differ between GP and IP. Compared to IP, the LM of GP was redder (a^* : 6.4 vs. 6.0; $P < 0.05$) and more tender (shear force: 3.8 vs. 4.1 kg; $P < 0.01$). Androstene, skatole and indole concentrations in the backfat did not ($P > 0.05$) differ among treatments. The fact that IP consumed more feed than GP indicates that higher activity in the group-pen negatively affected feed intake but not ADG, thereby influencing feed efficiency and lean tissue accretion.