

© 2014 Universities Federation for Animal Welfare  
The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead,  
Hertfordshire AL4 8AN, UK  
www.ufaw.org.uk

Animal Welfare 2014, 23: 435-443  
ISSN 0962-7286  
doi: 10.7120/09627286.23.4.435

## **Relationships between pig welfare, productivity and farmer disposition**

*T Jääskeläinen<sup>\*†</sup>, T Kauppinen<sup>†</sup>, KM Vesala<sup>†</sup> and A Valros<sup>†</sup>*

<sup>†</sup> Research Centre for Animal Welfare and Department of Production Animal Medicine, PO Box 57, 00014 University of Helsinki, Finland

<sup>‡</sup> Department of Social Research, PO Box 54, 00014 University of Helsinki, Finland

\* Contact for correspondence and requests for reprints: [terhi.jaaskelainen@alumni.helsinki.fi](mailto:terhi.jaaskelainen@alumni.helsinki.fi)

### **Abstract**

---

*The aim of this study was, firstly, to investigate the connection between on-farm assessed welfare scores and production parameters for sows, and secondly, to examine how farmers perceive the connection between their disposition, animal welfare and productivity. We assessed environmental and management preconditions on animal welfare and interviewed farmers on 30 Finnish farms. We studied the relationship between welfare and production using correlation and regression analyses. The theory of planned behaviour served as an articulation of farmer disposition when studying farmer perceptions. Concerning the production data, better welfare scores from the 'health and stockmanship' category during lactation were correlated with shorter reproduction cycle and fewer stillborn piglets and it also explained some of the variation in the number of piglets per year and the length of the farrowing interval. The farmers agreed that the productivity parameters and the principles of assessing welfare used in this study were relevant. A majority of farmers considered that animal welfare affects productivity and that there are associations between farmer attitudes, animal welfare and productivity. There were no statistical relationships between farmer perceptions and animal welfare; yet on the farms of farmers with positive perceptions of attitudes to animal welfare and productivity there were slightly lower piglet mortality rates and lower stillbirth rates than on the farms with farmers holding less positive views. We conclude that actions to improve animal welfare also have an economic impact as they enhance sow production. Good stockmanship and healthier animals result in more piglets born and a shorter reproduction cycle.*

---

**Keywords:** *animal welfare, attitude, farmer, pig, production, theory of planned behaviour*