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Awareness concerning optimal pig production management and animal welfare among smallholder farmers in Tanzania

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to assess smallholder farmer awareness in terms of good pig management and to identify serious management issues that should be readily changeable despite resources being limited in a rural setting. Methodology was a combination of questionnaire and observational surveys performed at pig-keeping households practising either confinement or a free-range system. Households were identified using the snowball method. A total of 120 pig-keeping households were included, of which 32 practised free-range systems and 88 confined their pigs. The observational survey included management practices and welfare assessment based on one pig from each of the 120 households. The results indicated that farmers were not aware of the basic requirements of pigs regardless of the production system practised. Water was often neglected and provided less frequently among those practising free-range. Pigs kept free-range also received treatment less frequently compared to those kept confined. Pigs were generally kept in poor conditions with risk of injury and without shelter from wind, rain, cold, heat, and sun. Welfare issues exist within both production systems, but issues within the confinement system could be easily eliminated with proper management. More knowledge on basic pig husbandry is required in the region and is essential for improving production. Educating farmers on the basic requirements for water and feed, alone, could vastly improve smallholder pig production. Education on pig management should therefore be a cornerstone in any research activity involving smallholder farmers in rural areas.

Keywords: Africa, animal welfare, feed, production systems, stocking density, water