

# Shoulder ulcers affect behaviour of sows

Shoulder ulcers in lactating sows affect the behaviour of sows shown as shorter lying time, increased restlessness and lower nursing frequency.



This is the result of an investigation conducted by Aarhus University and the Danish Pig Research Centre.

Sows with shoulder ulcers have lower nursing frequency and less contact with their young compared with healthy sows without shoulder ulcers.

The results indicate, that the sows are affected by the shoulder ulcers and attempt to ease any pain or discomfort through frequent changes in posture and by spending less time lying.

Shoulder ulcers are pressure wounds most often observed in the shoulder region of lactating sows housed in production systems. While there has been some focus on shoulder ulcers in recent years, there is still very little knowledge of how the ulcers affect the sows and their behaviour.

Based on observation of sows for a 24-hour period approximately two weeks after farrowing, a new study now finds that sows with shoulder ulcers spend less time lying, are more restless, have lower nursing frequency and less contact with their young compared with healthy sows without shoulder ulcers. Sows with ulcers also showed increased rubbing of the shoulder against the fittings than the healthy sows.

## **Signs of pain and discomfort**

Although sows two weeks after farrowing are motivated to nurse and care for their young, the investigation showed that their maternal behaviour was affected. Overall, the results can be explained by the fact that the sows are affected by the shoulder ulcers and attempt to ease any pain or discomfort through frequent changes in posture and by spending less time lying. More detailed knowledge of the implications of the lesions for the welfare of the sow and the piglets requires further research in the area.

The scientific paper "Does the presence of shoulder ulcers affect the behaviour of sows?" Can be obtained by contacting Senior Researcher Mette S. Herskin or downloaded [here](#).

**Source:** [Linda Søndergaard Sørensen, Aarhus University](#)

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