

EASINESS OF HANDLING, PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE, SKIN LESIONS AND MEAT QUALITY IN PIGS TRANSPORTED WITH TWO TRUCK TYPES

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A total of 1,728 pigs were transported to slaughter using two double-decked trucks, one featuring a hydraulic deck (HD) to load and unload the upper level and the other presenting a fixed upper deck (FD) only accessible by a ramp, with the objective to study the effects of the loading and unloading system in the truck on behaviour, blood parameters (cortisol, lactate and creatine kinase [CK]), skin lesions and meat quality traits. The use of HD resulted in easier and faster loading ($P < 0.05$ for both) compared with the FD. Blood cortisol levels were influenced by the loading/unloading system, with lower ($P < 0.05$) levels being found in pigs located in HD than in those transported on the FD. Truck type had no effect on the incidence of skin lesions and pork quality in this study ($P > 0.05$). It can be concluded that the use of the truck model featuring the upper hydraulic deck should be recommended to ease handling at loading improving animal welfare and reducing the work load of handlers.

Keywords: Transport, behaviour, blood parameters, skin damage, pork quality, pigs