

# FARROWING AND SAVAGING IN WILD BOAR SOWS

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## Summary

Unwanted behaviours such as savaging are sometimes attributed to the process of domestication. Videotaping of farmed wild boar sows during farrowing revealed that 33 per cent were aggressive towards their piglets. Aggression varied with genetic line and was associated with long farrowings involving numerous posture changes. Savaging does not appear to be caused by domestication. Factors associated with piglet-directed aggression in wild boar may also be implicated in savaging in domestic sows.

## Introduction

The farming of 'alternative' species, such as wild boar, has increased in popularity over recent years. However, almost nothing is known about the maternal behaviour of wild boar kept in captivity.

Piglet-directed aggression (savaging) which occurs in domestic sows has not previously been reported in captive wild boar. In this study, the farrowing behaviour of three lines of captive wild boar sows was videotaped to find out whether sows were aggressive towards their piglets during the farrowing period, and if so, how often this occurred and what factors were associated with this behaviour.

## Methods

Twenty-four first parity farmed wild boar sows were housed in individual, straw-bedded farrowing pens measuring 1.52 x 3.05 m. Sows were of three genetic lines: San Diego (SD); Peter Kalden (PK); and Scandinavian (S).

The sows were videotaped during farrowing. These tapes were used to measure the duration of farrowing and number of posture changes during farrowing, and to score the degree of piglet-directed aggression (0 = none; 1 = moderate; 2 = severe). In addition, sows were weighed before farrowing; after birth, litters were weighed and piglet sex ratios recorded.

## Results

Eight sows (33 per cent) scored either 1 or 2, indicating some degree of piglet-directed aggression during farrowing. SD sows were significantly more aggressive than either PK or S. Sows with an aggression score of 2 took significantly

longer to farrow, and made significantly more posture changes during farrowing, than those scoring 0 or 1. Litters of sows who scored 1 for aggression were more male-biased than those of sows scoring either 0 or 2.

## Conclusions

One-third of captive wild boar sows showed some degree of aggression towards their piglets. Thus, savaging does not appear to be a product of

domestication. Savaging in wild boar varied with genetic line, and was associated with long farrowings involving multiple posture changes. The same factors may be associated in savaging in domestic sows.

## Acknowledgements

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*Savaging does not appear to be caused by domestication*



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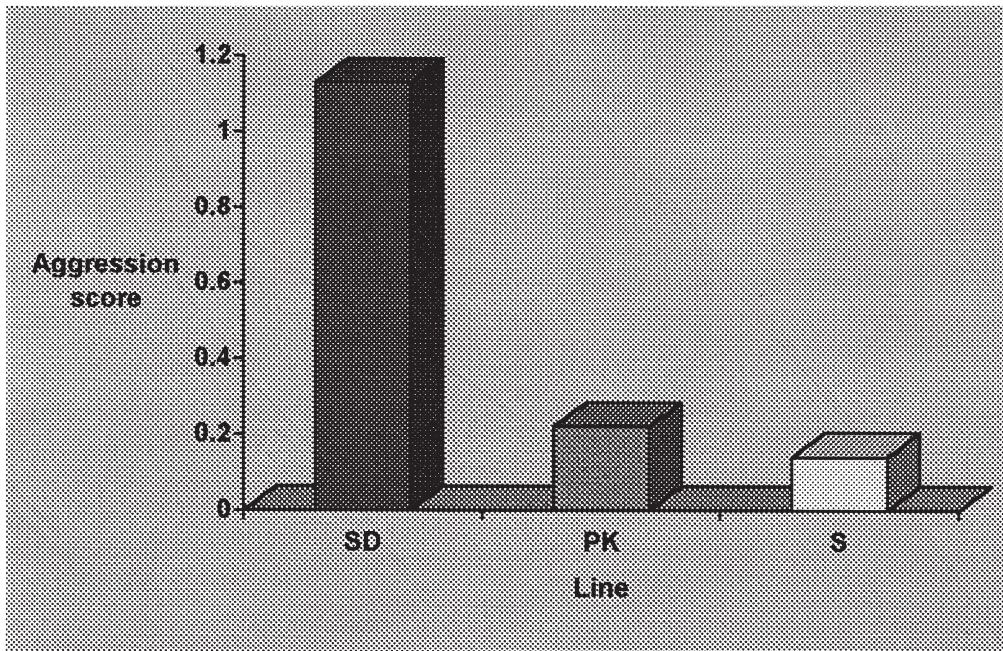


Figure 1. Aggression scores at farrowing of San Diego (SD), Peter Kalden (PK) and Scandinavian (S) sows. San Diego sows were significantly more aggressive towards their piglets.

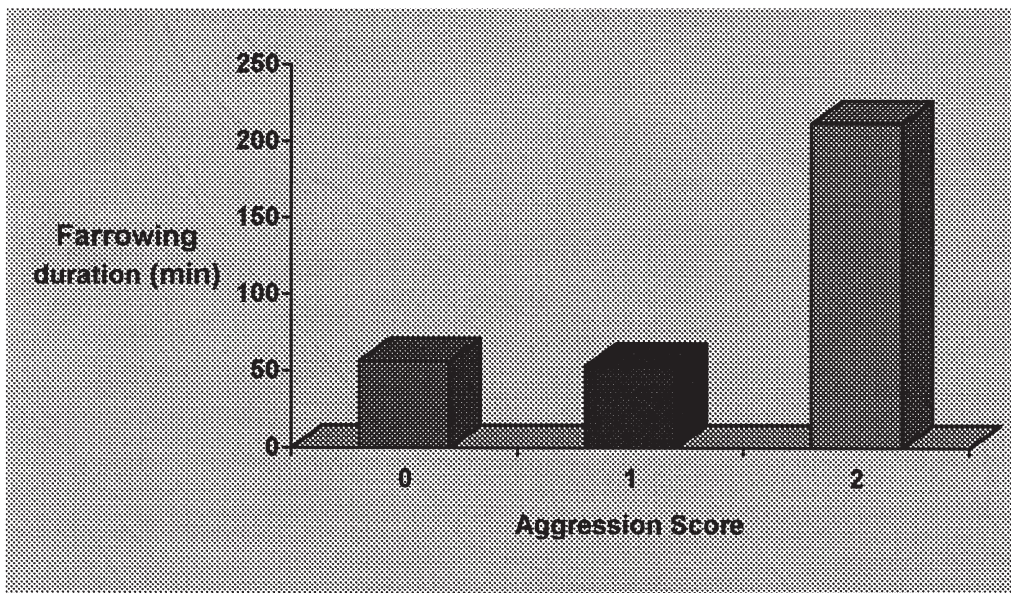


Figure 2. Duration of farrowing (min) of sows with aggression scores of 0, 1 and 2. Farrowing took significantly longer in the most aggressive sows.