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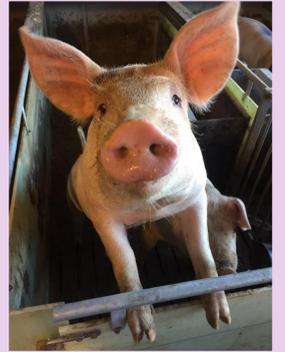
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The ERA-Net ANIHWA project SOUNDWEL: DETERMINING VOCAL CORRELATES OF EMOTIONS IN DOMESTIC PIGS

Padilla de la Torre Monica², Janczak Andrew², Nordgreen Janicke³, Boissy Alain⁴, Bourguet Cécile⁴, Coulon Marjorie⁶, Döpjan Sandra⁷, Hillmann Edna^{1,8}, Špinka Marek⁹, Tallet Céline¹⁰, Briefer Elodie¹



¹Ethology and Animal Welfare Unit, ETH Zurich, Switzerland, ²Department of Production Animal Clinical Sciences, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway, ³Department of Food Safety and Infection Biology, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway, ⁴INRA UMR 1213 Herbivores, France, ⁵Bureau E.T.R.E., France, ⁶Cabinet EASIER, France, ⁷Leibniz Institute for Farm Animal Biology, Germany, ⁸Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany, ⁹Institute of Animal Science, Prague, Czech Republic, ¹⁰INRA UMR 1348 PEGASE, France.

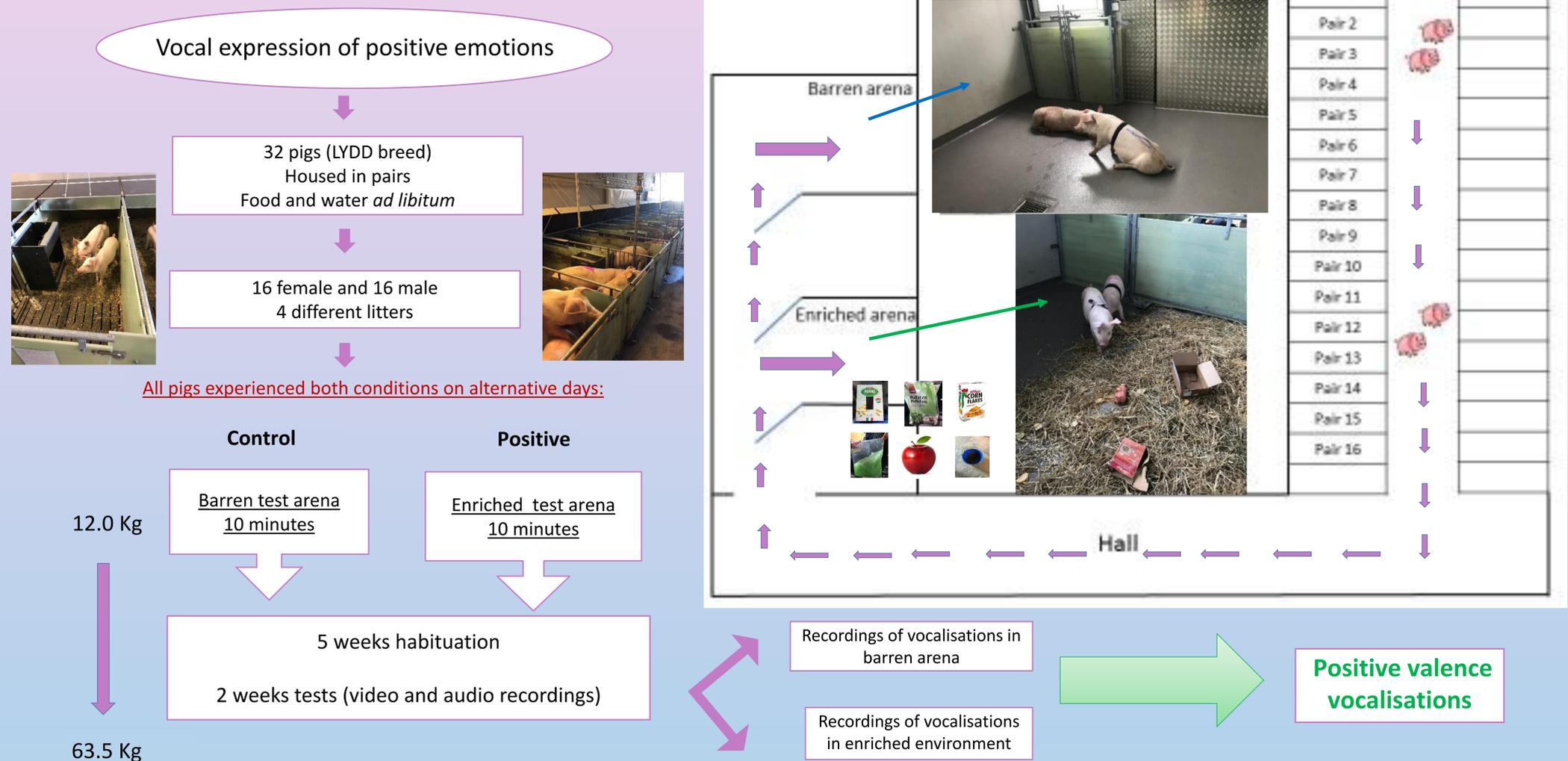
Introduction

It has been suggested that vocal correlates of emotions might be a convenient non-invasive approach to assess welfare. Several studies have provided evidence for vocal indicators of emotional arousal and valence in pigs and other mammals. However, up to now, the use of vocalisation as welfare indicator is still limited. The first step in achieving this core objective of this project is to build a comprehensive database of pig vocalisations recorded in different emotionally loaded contexts.

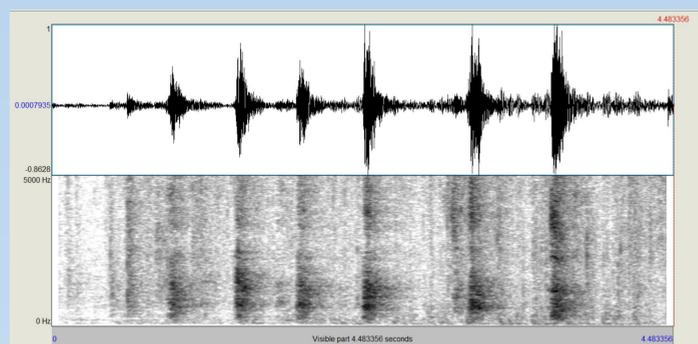
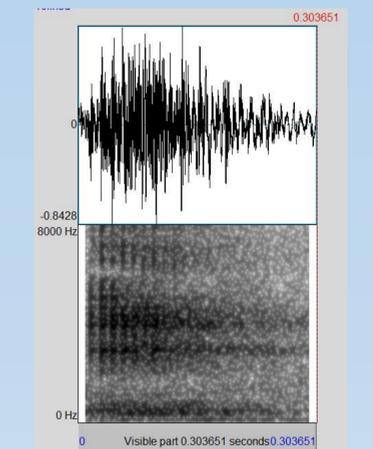
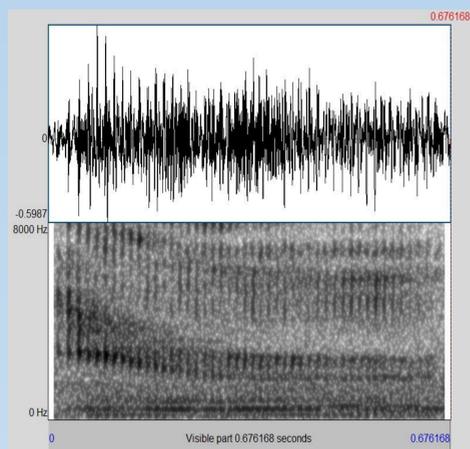
Objectives

- The SOUNDWEL project aims to develop a robust vocalisation recognition tool that will allow a fine-tuned real-time recognition of pig emotions in farm living conditions and in slaughter context by using state-of-the-art bioacoustics techniques. The ultimate objective is to develop a practical tool giving farmers a good overview of the emotional state of their animals.
- The current study was aimed at collecting pig vocalisations produced in positive contexts, which are currently lacking from our database, and which are necessary to improve the validity of the tool. The contexts chosen for this study were a) repeated exposure to an enriched environment (assumed to be positive) and b) repeated exposure to a barren environment (assumed to be neutral/less positive).

Methodology



Behavioural and vocal profiles will be assessed in all pigs



Additionally, we recorded pig barks while the pig pairs were herded from their home pens to the experimental arena and vice versa, which appears as a positive and high arousal context. These vocalisations and related behaviour will also be subsequently analysed.

Conclusions

- These data and validation of acoustic correlates is an essential basis for later development of a vocalisation-based emotion recognition tool in subsequent stages of the SOUNDWEL project, which ultimately, will allow farmers to make better informed decisions in order to comply with requirements for high welfare standards.
- We expect that vocal parameters produced by pigs under enriched test conditions will differ from parameters produced under barren test conditions.
- We additionally expect the pig barks produced on the way to the experimental arena to differ from those produced on the way back to the home pen.