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## **Review: Implication of redox imbalance in animal health and performance at critical periods, insights from different farm species**

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1 **Review: Implication of redox imbalance in animal health and performance at**  
2 **critical periods, insights from different farm species**

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14

15 **Abstract**

16 The process of oxidative stress occurs all over the production chain of animals and  
17 food products. This review summarizes insights obtained in different farm species  
18 (pigs, ruminants, poultry, and fishes) to underpin the most critical periods for the  
19 venue of oxidative stress, namely birth/hatching and weaning/start-feeding phase.  
20 Common responses between species are also unravelled in periods of high  
21 physiological demands when animals are facing dietary deficiencies in specific  
22 nutrients, suggesting that nutritional recommendations must consider the

23 modulation of responses to oxidative stress for optimizing production performance  
24 and quality of food products. These conditions concern challenges such as heat  
25 stress, social stress, and inflammation. The magnitude of the responses is partly  
26 dependent on the prior experience of the animals before the challenge, reinforcing  
27 the importance of nutrition and other management practices during early periods to  
28 promote the development of antioxidant reserves in the animal. When these  
29 practices also improved performance and health of the animal, this further confirms  
30 the central role played by oxidative stress in physiologically and  
31 environmentally-induced perturbations. Difficulties in interpreting responses to  
32 oxidative stress arise from the fact that the indicators are only partly shared between  
33 studies, and their modulations may also be challenge-specific. A consensus about  
34 the best indicators to assess pro-oxidative and antioxidant pathways is of huge  
35 demand to propose a synthetic index measurable in a non-invasive way and  
36 interpretable along the productive life of the animals.

37

38 **Keywords:** Oxidative stress, Physiological transition, Inflammation, Challenge,  
39 Animal performance.

40

#### 41 **Implications**

42 The agro-ecological transition in farming practices stimulates natural processes in  
43 biological systems. Oxidative stress is considered as a pivotal mechanism  
44 underlying the adaptation of animals to management practices and acclimation to

45 environmental constraints. This reinforces the importance of monitoring and  
46 understanding the responses to pro-oxidant challenges in farm animals. An overview  
47 in different farm species from different ecosystems (terrestrial, aquatic) may be  
48 helpful to obtain a consensus on the best biomarkers to measure the redox status  
49 and evaluate and propose management practices able to limit the short and  
50 long-term consequences of oxidative stress on animal performance, health and  
51 welfare.

## 52 **Introduction**

53 Farm animals are facing many environmental conditions and constraints that  
54 challenge their physiology during their whole productive life. Oxidative stress has  
55 emerged as an important issue to explain dis-adaptation and dysfunctions (Abuelo et  
56 al., 2019) leading to impaired survival, bad production performance or compromised  
57 health and immunity (Al-Gubory et al., 2010). Oxidative stress arises from the  
58 imbalance between the production of reactive oxygen species (**ROS**) and the  
59 neutralizing capacity of the antioxidant system. The ROS family includes free  
60 radicals which are often small and diffusible molecules with one or more unpaired  
61 electrons (peroxides, superoxide, hydroxyl radical) and no-radical molecules  
62 (hydrogen peroxide, peroxinitrite, etc.) which are by-products of the metabolism of  
63 oxygen in animal cells. The ROS have beneficial effects for many biological  
64 processes such as stem cell differentiation, lineage commitment, self-renewal and  
65 cell homeostasis (Ren et al., 2015), because they act as signals inside and between  
66 cells to regulate gene expressions involved in cell development and growth (Dalton

67 et al., 2002). However, exaggerated and even uncontrolled ROS production induces  
68 oxidative damage to proteins, lipids and DNA, and results in the deterioration of  
69 cellular structure and functions, and even cell death. Damaged and destroyed  
70 macro-biomolecules can also trigger inflammatory responses as a starting point of  
71 altered health. Both enzymatic and non-enzymatic molecules produced by the  
72 animal (uric acid, glutathione **GSH**) or brought by the diet (vitamins E and C,  
73 carotenoids, flavonoids, polyphenols, selenium, zinc) act as antioxidants to prevent  
74 or repair the oxidative damages. Oxidative stress is then defined as a distress  
75 situation corresponding to an overexposure to oxidants which results in non-specific  
76 oxidation of biomolecules and disruption of redox signalling (Sies and Jones, 2020).  
77 This can induce transient or permanent perturbations which generate physiological  
78 consequences within the cells and at the whole animal level (Pignatelli et al., 2018).

79 A better knowledge of the critical periods when exaggerated ROS production  
80 occurs and(or) elements in the antioxidant defence system are lacking, is required in  
81 farm animals to pay attention on aggravating events during these periods, with the  
82 objectives to limit consequences on production performance, health, and welfare.  
83 This review enlightens critical periods for the venue of oxidative stress in different  
84 farm species, including mammals and oviparous species living in terrestrial or  
85 aquatic environments. Detailed mechanisms underlying oxidative issue for a given  
86 species can be found in other reviews (Lushchak, 2011; Birnie-Gauvin et al., 2017;  
87 Chowdhury and Saikia, 2020; Hoseinifar et al., 2021). However, enlightening  
88 common or specific responses across species may allow a better anticipation of the

89 risk events for each species when the conventional management practices must  
90 evolve to cope with climatic pressure and environmental or societal expectations.  
91 For instance, quality issues for all species can be foreseen when considering meat  
92 quality degradation of broilers due at least in part to the physiological challenge  
93 imposed by rapid growth on oxidative metabolism. Pastoral ruminant systems can  
94 provide examples for risks underlying outdoor productions in pigs or other species.  
95 Inter-species comparison in the modulation of pro- and antioxidant molecules and its  
96 relationships with variations of performance and health may also underpin the best  
97 indicators (when, how, what, where, frequency) to monitor oxidative stress in farm  
98 animals.

### 99 **Critical physiological transition periods in early life**

100 Physiological transition periods are associated with many obligatory changes in  
101 types of nutrients, environmental temperature, physical activity, etc... These induce  
102 many metabolic changes in cell physiology, notably for mitochondria responsible for  
103 energy production and controlling many processes from signalling to cell death  
104 (Salin et al., 2015; Bottje, 2019).

### 105 ***Birth or hatching and start-feeding phases***

106 Birth in mammals is the most striking shared period for the venue of acute oxidative  
107 stress, due to the abrupt switch from a fetal environment with a lower oxygen supply  
108 (maternal-mediated respiration in the uterus) than that after birth (autonomous  
109 pulmonary respiration). Whereas hypoxia is necessary for the development and  
110 growth of the fetus, the aerobic metabolism is needed to efficiently provide enough

111 energy for the newborn to ensure survival and development (Morton and Brodsky,  
112 2016). This switch is obligatory associated with large amounts of ROS generated by  
113 the neonatal cells (Friel et al., 2004). This period is also concomitant with a transition  
114 in gut activity from amniotic fluid to colostrum feeding, which is another source of  
115 oxidative stress (Osorio, 2020; Rosa et al., 2021). In oviparous species, many  
116 similarities at hatching are found with these events at birth. In poultry where the  
117 embryo derives nutrient requirements from the egg, changes in oxygen availability  
118 and nutrition at hatching also induce alterations in the redox status. The role of  
119 oxygen in the venue of oxidative stress was proved by the fact that  
120 hypoxia/re-oxygenation protocol to pre-hatching ducklings resulted in a higher  
121 susceptibility to ROS monitored in red blood cells of these animals (Rey et al., 2010).  
122 In situation of aqueous life for fishes, the hatching period is also critical but this is  
123 likely more due to the nutritional transition and the dramatic morphological changes  
124 in the larvae which both increase the energy demand at this moment, than due to  
125 changes in oxygen availability. A specificity of fish is also the high concentrations of  
126 long chain n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in feed and in animal tissues, which are  
127 thus particularly prone to oxidation. In the absence of a suitable antioxidant  
128 protection, lipid peroxidation in fish tissues due to the ingestion of oxidized feeds  
129 during the early developmental stages thus led to depressed growth and bad  
130 survival (Fontagné-Dicharry et al., 2014), inflammatory response  
131 (Fontagné-Dicharry et al., 2018) and various pathologies including muscular  
132 dystrophy (Boglione et al., 2013).

133 In all species, internal defence actors against ROS are prepared by the cells in  
134 before birth or hatching. For instance in pigs, proteins of the peroxiredoxins family  
135 were up-regulated with advancing gestational age in adipose tissue (Gondret et al.,  
136 2018). The global antioxidant capacity only slightly increases during the few days  
137 after birth, in a moment when plasma concentration of hydroperoxides dramatically  
138 increases (Buchet et al., 2017). This explains why newborns suffer from oxidative  
139 stress in the days after birth. With the gradual development of the antioxidant  
140 system, the oxidative balance can be recovered in 7 days after birth in pigs (Yin et  
141 al., 2013). Similarly, most neonatal calves are experiencing oxidative stress during  
142 the first few weeks of age (Abuelo et al., 2019). During the early developmental  
143 stages in fishes such as trout, the antioxidant protection rather relies on antioxidant  
144 vitamins in the earliest embryonic stages, and after first-feeding, of antioxidant  
145 enzymes (Fontagné et al., 2008). However, similarly to mammals, the endogenous  
146 antioxidant defence system is not fully responsive, leading to pronounced lipid  
147 peroxidation when oxidized feed is ingested during this period (Fontagné-Dicharry et  
148 al., 2014).

149 Importantly, the consequences of the redox imbalance during the first days after  
150 birth or hatching are more detrimental in situations where prior tissue development is  
151 impaired. In pigs, intrauterine growth restriction, a common feature observed in a  
152 subset of littermates for sows selected for high prolificacy, was associated with  
153 impaired mitochondrial biogenesis and energy homeostasis and with greater hepatic  
154 malondialdehyde (**MDA**) concentration, a marker of lipid peroxidation (Zhang et al.,



2017). Depressed levels of proteins that regulate oxidative defence and increased levels of proteins involved in the response to oxidative stress have been reported by proteomic studies on intestine, liver and muscle from intrauterine growth retarded piglets (Wang et al., 2008). This means that a particular attention must be paid on stimulating the antioxidant capacities of piglets during the perinatal period, and especially those of the lightest weight. In ruminants, suboptimal intrauterine conditions can similarly affect the foetus (Abuelo et al., 2019). As compared with single foetuses, twinning in ewes led to intrauterine growth restriction, and this was associated with higher oxidative stress monitored in the cord blood (Sales et al., 2018). Artificial feeding after birth to compensate for an insufficient milk production by the ewe in the large litters, further depressed the antioxidant capacity of the lambs when compared with those fed by their mothers, together with other negative indicators of animal health and welfare (Mialon et al., 2021). In poultry, oxidative stress was also increased by management practices before hatch. For instance, egg storage longer than 7 days, which is a common practice in farms for logistical reasons, negatively influenced the embryonic development and resulted in early embryonic mortality and lower hatchability (Fasenko, 2007; Pokhrel et al., 2018). Long egg storage influenced the redox balance, as illustrated by the lower total antioxidant status (**TAS**) in serum (Pertusa et al., 2017) and greater MDA concentrations in the serum and yolk sac (Yang et al., 2020). After hatching, birds have to cope with specific husbandry conditions and transports. Delayed placement in hatchery resulted in an increase in lipid peroxidation as proved by higher

177 thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (**TBARS**) in blood and the liver (Foury et al.,  
178 2020), and negatively affected animal performance (Guilloteau et al., 2019). This  
179 dis-adaptive oxidative profile was also manifested by altered concentrations in  
180 metabolites involved in the antioxidant status and energy metabolism in the fecal  
181 metabolome, until at least 13 days after the delayed placement (Beauclercq et al.,  
182 2019). Whereas no difference was detected in the redox balance indicators in blood  
183 at this time and later in age (Beauclercq et al., 2019; Foury et al, 2020), expression  
184 levels of various genes involved in oxidative stress (such as the transcription factors  
185 *NFE2L2* and *MEF2A*) were modified. The differences were accentuated for males,  
186 which have a lower systemic anti-oxidative activity including lower uric acid  
187 concentration, TAS and ferric reducing ability of plasma (**FRAP**) than females.

188 Altogether, these comparisons between species not only underline birth or hatching  
189 as a critical period for the venue of oxidative stress, but they also reveal how  
190 selection for reproduction traits and practices to manage it, further accentuate the  
191 redox imbalance and consequences in the young animals. Besides identifying these  
192 risk factors, possibilities during prenatal/pre-hatching periods may be shared in the  
193 different species to sustain the development of antioxidant capacities of animal  
194 tissues, and thereby to preserve health. Because intrauterine growth restricted  
195 piglets and lambs serve as animal models for a better understanding of the  
196 development of the human embryo and complication of pregnancy, there is a  
197 considerable literature dealing with orally-treated pups to correct oxidative stress  
198 soon after birth. Neonatal formula rich in proteins have been tested to accelerate

199 growth recovery, with consequences in the abundance of redox proteins such as  
200 peroxiredoxins, glutathione S-transferase and cyclophilin-A in tissues of growing  
201 intrauterine growth restricted piglets (Sarr et al., 2012). In pigs and ruminants as in  
202 Humans (Manuelian et al., 2021; Fardet and Chardigny, 2013), other tested  
203 solutions include specific aminoacids with antioxidant and functional properties, and  
204 plants extracts rich in lipotropic and antioxidant compounds to improve antioxidant  
205 capacities during the postnatal period. Dietary antioxidant supplementations than  
206 can routinely be used in farms, have been also tested for gestating and lactating  
207 females to improve the redox status of their young (Abuelo et al., 2019). However,  
208 effects are not always conclusive, depending on the level and timing of  
209 supplementation and on the active principles tested. Reducing maternal stress may  
210 also have beneficial consequences on oxidative stress in the female and the young  
211 (Merlot et al., 2019; see section 5.1). In laying hens, supplying diets with exogenous  
212 antioxidants such as vitamin E, has positive effects on antioxidant status of the egg  
213 yolks and newly hatched chicks (Yang et al., 2020), showing again the benefit of  
214 preparing antioxidant defence through the nutrition of the female. Supplementation  
215 of broiler feeds with herbal plant extract like *Melissa officinalis* L. also has beneficial  
216 effects on the redox balance, with improved performance during the growth phase  
217 and different health effects (Travel et al., 2021). The antioxidant defence system  
218 during the early developmental stages in fish can be also sustained by  
219 supplementing diets of the broodstock with aminoacids such as methionine  
220 (Fontagné-Dicharry et al., 2017) and with selenium (Wischhusen et al., 2019). If the

221 parental selenium supplementation can improve antioxidant status and performance  
222 of the progeny, this may however induce a lower stress resistance in the longer term  
223 (Wischhusen et al., 2020a) due to alteration of the Methionine cycle and epigenetic  
224 changes (Wischhusen et al., 2020b). Therefore, any strategies for parental feeding  
225 must be investigated at short and long term before definitive recommendations can  
226 be formulated.

### 227 ***Juvenile transitions***

228 Other critical periods for the venue of oxidative stress occur later in the development,  
229 when physiological transitions are abruptly imposed to the young animals (Table 2).  
230 In these situations, oxidative stress is more likely the consequence of systemic  
231 inflammation rather than the cause of systemic disorders. Indeed, in conventional  
232 farming systems for pigs and dairy calves, weaning is lived as the abrupt separation  
233 from the mother, and this is also associated with a dietary switch from milk to solid  
234 feeds rich in plant raw materials. Weaning may generate immune and inflammatory  
235 responses that can reach a systemic dimension (McCracken et al., 1999; Gilbert et  
236 al., 2019). For instance, intestinal dysfunction is often observed just after weaning  
237 and it is clearly associated with inflammatory response and oxidative stress at both  
238 the systemic and intestinal levels, which are manifested by changes in the  
239 expression levels of cytokines and antioxidant enzymes together with increased  
240 concentrations of lipid oxidation markers in pigs (Zhou et al., 2018). In pigs,  
241 hydroperoxides concentrations increased whereas the blood antioxidant potential  
242 (**BAP**) decreased during the days just after weaning, leading an increase in the

243 oxidative stress index (hydroperoxides / BAP ratio) between 5 and 12 days after  
244 weaning (Buchet et al., 2017). Other redox indicators such as plasma MDA, FRAP  
245 and erythrocyte GSH content indicate that consequences of oxidative stress may  
246 last at least 28 days after weaning (Degroot et al., 2020). The local and systemic  
247 inflammatory responses are probably the main cause of the production of oxidation  
248 products during the days after weaning. In support, oxidative stress was higher in  
249 piglets with post-weaning diarrhoea than in those with no diarrhea (Buchet et al.,  
250 2017). Importantly, antioxidant defence and clearance of dysfunctional mitochondria  
251 at weaning were more compromised in intrauterine growth restricted piglets than in  
252 their normal littermates (Novais et al., 2021), reinforcing the importance of prenatal  
253 events in the adaptation capacity to postnatal challenges. Indicators of oxidative  
254 stress were also observed in the exhaled breath condensate in calves soon after  
255 weaning. Indeed, oxidative stress may result from respiratory infections due to  
256 stress-induced alterations in the immune function at this moment (Ranade et al.,  
257 2014). In both species, another cause of oxidative stress may be the anorexia  
258 observed during the first days after weaning. Anorexia reduces the intake of all  
259 nutrients, and among them, of those with antioxidant properties at the time when  
260 their use is precisely needed to neutralize the oxidative products generated by  
261 inflammation (Amazan et al., 2012). For instance in pigs, blood concentration of  
262 vitamin E declined sharply, and to a lesser extent, that of vitamin A (Buchet et al.,  
263 2017) in the days following weaning.

264 Even if oxidative stress might be the consequence rather than the cause of  
265 stress and disorders observed just after weaning, it is important to improve  
266 antioxidant defence before weaning to limit the post-weaning alterations of  
267 performance. Indeed, piglets whose growth was the less affected during the 3 weeks  
268 following weaning in commercial farms, were those whose oxidative stress  
269 increased the least, and for which blood vitamin E concentration before weaning was  
270 the highest (Buchet et al., 2017). Moreover, the oxidative status of piglets was  
271 improved thanks to the reduction of hydroperoxides concentration in the blood when  
272 the starter diet included a premix combining vitamins E, A, C, polyphenols and trace  
273 elements such as zinc and selenium, and this was associated with increased  
274 post-weaning growth rate of the supplemented piglets (Robert et al., 2009). In  
275 calves, parenteral supplementation of minerals and vitamins with antioxidant effects  
276 also prevented the decrease in variables related to the immune system, improved  
277 antibody responses and had positive effects on BW (Mattioli et al., 2020). Moreover,  
278 monitoring changes in salivary biomarkers of anti-oxidant capacity, such as Trolox  
279 equivalent antioxidant capacity (**TEAC**), FRAP and cupric ion reducing antioxidant  
280 capacity (**Cuprac**), seems a promising approach to characterize stressful conditions  
281 in calves at weaning (Rubio et al., 2021). These examples in the two species  
282 suggest that robustness of an animal might be associated, at least in part, with its  
283 own ability to limit oxidative stress. In support to this assumption, later in growth, it  
284 was observed that BAP as an antioxidant measure in plasma combined with  
285 circulating concentrations of metabolic and immune indicators provided an

286 animal-centred index to predict the extent of reduction in growth rate when growing  
287 pigs are facing sanitary (inflammatory) challenges (Le Floc'h et al., 2021).

## 288 **Challenges during rearing periods**

### 289 ***Physiological challenge: the pro-oxidant effects of high growth rate***

290 Since many decades, farm animals have been selected for productive performance,  
291 such as growth rate and yield of edible products (meat or flesh, eggs, milk) which are  
292 high-nutrient-demanding processes. At the cellular level, ROS generation takes  
293 place at the electron transport chain during the process of oxidative phosphorylation,  
294 so that ROS are normal by-products of mitochondrial metabolism associated to  
295 energy production. Any increase in cellular metabolism that generates greater  
296 energy and oxygen demands would then increase the activity of the mitochondrial  
297 respiratory chain and the production of ROS. This suggests that accelerated growth  
298 rate would be obligatory associated with accentuated risks for oxidative stress. In  
299 support, plasma concentrations of hydroperoxides continuously increased in  
300 growing pigs (Buchet et al., 2017). In addition, fast-growing lines and breeds have a  
301 deteriorated redox status when compared with slow-growing lines or breeds  
302 (Brambilla et al., 2002; Merlot et al., 2012). However, no particular diseases are  
303 observed in these situations, although high selected breeds are suggested to be less  
304 robust than unselected breeds. On the opposite, the extraordinary achievements of  
305 selection for fast growth rate and high breast meat yield in poultry resulted in the  
306 apparition of spontaneous myopathies (white striping, wooden breast, spaghetti  
307 muscles) in broilers and turkeys (Petracci et al., 2015). In these situations, the breast

308 muscle of the chickens displayed inflammation and oxidative stress (Baéza et al.,  
309 2018; Petracci et al., 2019), as revealed by greater levels of lipids (MDA content) and  
310 proteins (carbonyls content) oxidation products (Soglia et al., 2016; Baldi et al.,  
311 2018). When compared with normal muscles, they also had lower contents in  
312 anserine and carnosine, two dipeptides having antioxidant effects (Sundekilde et al.,  
313 2017). Comparison between species thus suggests the existence of a physiological  
314 limit after which any improvement of growth rate would have detrimental effects on  
315 health.

316       Studies dealing with lines selected for residual feed intake, a measure of feed  
317 efficiency, provide more insights on the role of mitochondrial functionalities in  
318 managing the balance between oxidative products and antioxidants in animals  
319 selected for production performance. In pigs, the protein profile of mitochondria  
320 isolated from skeletal muscle in the low residual feed intake pigs (the more efficient)  
321 indicated an increase in anti-oxidant defence capacity as compared with high  
322 residual feed intake pigs (Grubbs et al., 2017). In good hygiene housing conditions,  
323 low residual feed intake pigs have lower antioxidant enzymes activities such as the  
324 glutathione reductase and catalase in adipose tissue and superoxide dismutase in  
325 muscle, and when reared in degraded hygiene conditions inducing an inflammatory  
326 response, the low residual feed intake pigs produced lower ROS than the high  
327 residual feed intake pigs (Sierzant et al., 2019). Similarly, low residual feed intake  
328 bulls (more efficient) had a lower antioxidant activity in the liver, which is interpreted  
329 as the consequence of a lower ROS production in those animals as compared with



330 high residual feed intake bulls (McKenna et al., 2021). Taken together, mitochondrial  
331 functionality can modify the venue of oxidative stress, so that there is no absolute  
332 relationships high production performance and the venue of oxidative stress.

333 ***Dietary challenges: beyond the role of nutrients in growth performance***

334 Due to the close relationships between nutrient use for cellular energy production,  
335 oxidative phosphorylation and the oxido-reduction metabolism, any deficiency or  
336 excess in macro- and micro-nutrients can generate an imbalance between ROS  
337 production and antioxidant defense in tissues. The roles of the sulfur-containing  
338 aminoacids such as methionine (Table 3) and cysteine have been particularly  
339 examined. Indeed, these aminoacids are limiting for growth and lactation  
340 performance due to their involvement in protein synthesis in the different species,  
341 and considering that most forages and soybean meal have a low content in  
342 methionine. In aquaculture, plant ingredients included in aqua-feeds to reduce the  
343 use of ingredients derived from feed grade fisheries (i.e., fishmeal and fish oil) also  
344 contain less micronutrients such as methionine. Importantly, these aminoacids can  
345 directly modulate the redox status of animal tissues due to their involvement in the  
346 synthesis of GSH and taurine, two cellular compounds with antioxidant properties.

347 In growing pigs, dietary methionine deficiency reduced the GSH content in the  
348 muscle and liver, increased the enzymatic antioxidant activities in muscle and  
349 adipose tissues, and lowered the total anti-oxidant power (FRAP and  
350 1,1-diphényl-2-picrylhydrazyl) in plasma (Castellano et al., 2015; Conde-Aguilera et  
351 al., 2020). Conversely, feeding finishing pigs with extra dietary methionine supply

352 above growth requirements increased the muscle content in total GSH and  
353 dipeptides with antioxidant properties such as anserine, but without any changes in  
354 the antioxidant enzyme activities in muscle (Lebret et al., 2018; Gondret et al., 2021).  
355 In addition, the lower TBARS values generated during a forced oxidation kinetics in  
356 muscle of pigs fed extra methionine supply further indicated lower oxidative stress in  
357 those pigs (Lebret et al., 2018). In ruminants, a rumen-protected form of methionine  
358 may be supplemented to the diet which is of special interest for improving  
359 performance of high-yielding dairy cows and liver metabolism (Durand et al., 1992;  
360 Bauchart et al., 1998). However, in growing bulls receiving high forage diet  
361 supplemented by methionine (Cantalapiedra et al., 2020), there was no  
362 improvement in endogenous antioxidants nor changes in the systemic redox status  
363 (Durand Denys, unpublished data). In broilers, suboptimum supply of Methionine  
364 also resulted in lower antioxidant concentrations in plasma and body tissues.  
365 However, although a higher content in GSH in the liver was observed with increased  
366 methionine concentrations in the diet (Conde-Aguilera et al., 2016), liver  
367 concentrations of TBARS and protein carbonyls were not responsive to dietary  
368 methionine concentration (Zeitz et al., 2018).

369 In various fish species at different life stages, dietary methionine deficiency was  
370 also associated with an imbalance between oxidative products and antioxidants,  
371 with a decrease in GSH to oxidized glutathione (**GSSG**) ratio and an increase in lipid  
372 peroxidation and protein oxidation observed in rainbow trout juveniles and in the fry  
373 fed a deficient methionine diet for 12 weeks (Fontagné-Dicharry Stéphanie,

374 unpublished data). These changes were associated with higher expression levels of  
375 genes coding for the antioxidant enzyme glutathione S-transferase  $\pi$ , and for the  
376 tumor necrosis factor, a pro-inflammatory cytokine, in the flesh (Alami-Durante et al.,  
377 2018). Expression levels of genes coding for antioxidants such as glutathione  
378 S-transferase  $\pi$ , glutathione reductase and methionine sulfoxide reductase A1, were  
379 induced either directly by dietary methionine deficiency in the liver of the broodstock  
380 and in whole fry, or indirectly by the parental methionine intake as observed in the  
381 swim-up fry. Long-lasting parental effects of broodstock methionine-intake were  
382 observed in the fry, 21 days after first-feeding and irrespective of the fry diet, for the  
383 genes coding for methionine sulfoxide reductases A1 and B2 and superoxide  
384 dismutase 2 (Fontagné-Dicharry et al., 2017). However, in some studies, dietary  
385 methionine deficiency in rainbow trout juveniles decreased rather than increased  
386 carbonyls and GSH. This may be due to the sharp increase in mitochondrial  
387 degradation through mitophagy which decreased ROS production (Séité et al.,  
388 2018). Similarly, feeding extra methionine decreased protein oxidation in rainbow  
389 trout juveniles but increased lipid peroxidation and antioxidant genes expression in  
390 rainbow trout fry (Fontagné-Dicharry Stéphanie, unpublished data). Discrepancies  
391 between studies may be related to the specific needs in methionine depending of  
392 age and growth period of the trout.

393 These experiments illustrate the potential of dietary aminoacid contents for  
394 modulating oxidative stress in farm species, and further suggest that nutritional  
395 recommendations could be revised to better account for the effects on redox status

396 and not only on growth requirements. Other imbalanced feeding conditions such as  
397 glycemic index and balance in polyunsaturated fatty acids (n-6 /n-3), can be also  
398 concerned, but are not detailed in this review.

### 399 ***Environmental challenges***

400 The environment in which farm animals are reared is subjected to uncontrolled  
401 events that tackle the animal physiology. Different situations can be encountered in  
402 farm animals.

403       Maybe not enough considered, the level of oxygen in the environment is of  
404 importance due to its role in the venue of oxidative stress. Hypoxia occurs in most  
405 aquatic environments, especially those with a high stocking density. In rainbow trout  
406 juveniles, chronic hypoxia reduced blood GSH content and increased hepatic activity  
407 and transcript expression of the antioxidant enzyme catalase (Fontagné-Dicharry et  
408 al., 2020). Acute hypoxic challenge also induced oxidative stress with increased lipid  
409 peroxidation and glutathione disulfide content and transcriptional regulation of  
410 antioxidant enzymes in rainbow trout fry (Wischhusen et al., 2020a). Water  
411 oxygenation is thus a common recommended practice in aquaculture systems.  
412 However, if not adequate, it can conversely lead to hyperoxia that also induced  
413 physiological stress responses, characterized by a higher TBARS content in flesh  
414 and lower antioxidant enzyme activities in the liver of rainbow trout juveniles  
415 (Kalinowski et al., 2019). The situation in fish may question the consequences of  
416 inadequate oxygen supply in terrestrial species. Although rare, this may concern  
417 extensive farming systems in hard mountain conditions (cows or sheep) and poultry

418 houses in altitude. Differences in oxygen availability to tissues can also be due to  
419 external and inner events. In poultry, ascites is a frequent metabolic disorder  
420 manifested by the abnormal build-up of fluid in the peritoneal spaces, which can be  
421 induced by several factors such as continuous light, insufficient ventilation in the  
422 poultry house, high altitude and cold environment (Decuypere et al., 2000). Ascites  
423 is caused by an imbalance between the oxygen requirement of tissues and the  
424 oxygen supply to tissues. In addition, lipid peroxidation further played an important  
425 role in the pathogenesis of pulmonary hypertension associated with ascites, since  
426 free radicals led to endothelial damage in both heart and lung cells (Aksit et al.,  
427 2008). Controlling the early chick embryo environment may be a way to avoid these  
428 oxidative damage. The use of cold temperatures during egg incubation was proven  
429 to limit cold sensitivity later in age and the incidence of ascites (Shinder et al., 2011).  
430 Furthermore, chicks exposed to cyclically cold incubation temperatures exhibited  
431 increased antioxidant capacity, such as 8-fold higher catalase activity in the liver at  
432 hatch as compared to control-incubated chicks (Loyau et al. 2014).

433 Due to relationships between environmental availability of oxygen and heat  
434 tolerance of the animals, it is also of interest to consider the effects of heat stress on  
435 redox status of the animals. Considering the global warming, severity and  
436 frequencies of heat waves will be more frequent in the coming years, which further  
437 justifies to undergo specific studies to investigate the effects of chronic heat stress  
438 on oxidative stress in farm species. As examples, the effects of heat stress on  
439 different indicators of oxidative stress have been characterized in chicken and laying

440 hens (Lin et al., 2006; 2008). In laying hens, a moderate heat exposure (32°C during  
441 21 days) at the end of the laying period (60 weeks) increased ROS concentration in  
442 blood during heat exposure, and triggered blood antioxidants, on a temporary basis  
443 (superoxide dismutase activity) or during the whole period (FRAP) (Lin et al., 2008).  
444 In meat type chicken, acute heat stress also led to an increase in TBARS  
445 concentrations in the liver but not in the heart (Lin et al., 2006). Solutions to mitigate  
446 oxidative stress due to heat conditions can reside in improving the long-term  
447 thermo-tolerance of the animals. In poultry, cyclic increases in incubation  
448 temperature of the eggs led to a better survival to acute heat exposure at 35-days of  
449 age in male chickens (Piestun et al., 2008), and this was associated with many  
450 changes in expression levels of genes involved in stress response and  
451 vascularization acting in tissue oxygenation (Loyau et al., 2016). These examples  
452 obtained in fishes and chicken underline the importance of environmental events in  
453 the venue of oxidative stress, and these events may be more frequent in the coming  
454 years and have wider effects on a large broad of farm systems, and especially those  
455 in loose and harsh conditions.

## 456 **Pro-inflammatory and stressful conditions**

### 457 ***Housing conditions***

458 Poor hygiene conditions and the lack of respecting biosecurity recommendations  
459 have been clearly identified as risk factors for health of animals reared indoors. Poor  
460 hygiene conditions often induce a systemic inflammatory response due to carbon  
461 dioxide, ammonia, temperature and(or) bacterial pressure. Among other problems

462 such as pulmonary diseases, the poor sanitation levels have been associated with  
463 the generation of oxidative stress, as attested by a lower total antioxidant capacity in  
464 plasma (FRAP), greater plasma levels of hydroperoxides and an activation of  
465 antioxidant enzymes in tissues of growing pigs (Buchet et al., 2018; Sierzant et al.,  
466 2019). During reproduction, stressful housing situations can also generate oxidative  
467 stress. For example, moving young nulliparous sows from group-housing pens to  
468 individual crates increased salivary cortisol, and this was associated with an  
469 increased expression of oxidative stress enzymes in serum (Marco-Ramell et al.,  
470 2016). Greater plasma concentrations of hydroperoxides were also observed in  
471 sows housed in groups on concrete slatted floor during gestation when compared  
472 with sows housed in larger pens with deep straw litter favouring animal welfare  
473 (Merlot et al., 2019). After farrowing, the one-day old piglets born from the sows  
474 housed on concrete slatted floor have a lower blood antioxidant potential than piglets  
475 born from mothers that had been housed on straw (Quesnel et al., 2019). The  
476 cortisol whose secretion was increased in the group on concrete slatted floor, might  
477 play a role in this response, because studies in the avian species showed that  
478 glucocorticoids stimulated the production of oxidative products (Lin et al., 2004). In  
479 sheep, forced physical activity and transportation led to a higher cortisol  
480 concentration, an increase in the metabolism of carbohydrates and lipids; this  
481 resulted in the occurrence of oxidative stress proved by an increased MDA  
482 production and lower TAS (Gladine Cécile, unpublished data).

483 Self-medication behavior appears as an interesting strategy to reduce the  
484 consequences of production diseases. Self-medication has been defined as the  
485 ability of animals to select and use specific plants or substrates with medicinal  
486 properties to control or to prevent diseases or situations of discomfort.  
487 Self-medication is reported in ruminants which can consume plants associated with  
488 anti-parasitic properties to maintain health (Villalba et al, 2014). In cows and sheep,  
489 plant extracts rich in polyphenols, vitamin E or the combination of the two additives  
490 supplemented to n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid-rich diets have been tested to  
491 reduce the oxidative stress induced by forced physical activity and transport.  
492 Although the dietary administration of polyphenols or Vit E did not prevent the  
493 induction of lipoperoxidation, the dietary administration of the two antioxidants  
494 reduced the increase in MDA production in sheep (Gladine Cécile, unpublished  
495 data). This synergic effect of the antioxidants cocktail has been confirmed in dairy  
496 cows (Gobert et al., 2009). This can be explain by the dual abilities of the lipophilic  
497 (vitamin E) and hydrophilic (polyphenols) antioxidant properties to break the  
498 lipoperoxidation chain and reduce the amounts in oxygenated radical species  
499 (Delosière et al., 2020). Plant extracts combined with vitamin E can be  
500 supplemented to polyunsaturated fatty acid-rich diets to limit oxidative stress in cull  
501 cows, even for pre-slaughter animal stress (Gobert et al., 2010; Delosière et al.,  
502 2020). Strategies based on self-medication in ruminants have been also tested in  
503 poultry. For instance, lame chickens have a preference for a feed supplemented with  
504 an anti-inflammatory and analgesic drug rather than the same feed without the drug



505 (Danbury et al, 2000) and chicks can adjust essential oil consumption after a delayed  
506 placement by uptake of lemon verbena essential oil, which is known to have  
507 antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, sedative, and digestive effects (Guilloteau et al.,  
508 2019).

### 509 ***Surgical procedures***

510 Surgeries are used in farm animals at specific periods for castration, caesarian,  
511 visceral interventions, etc. For instance, during a high invasive surgery in sheep,  
512 although the antioxidant status estimated by TAS and the lipoperoxidation were not  
513 significantly altered, greater nitric oxide and lower GSH/GSSG ratio both indicated  
514 that the oxidation was triggered (Faure et al., 2017). To monitor the efficacy of  
515 drug-based pain alleviation protocols to surgeries, responses can be followed by  
516 using both behavioural and physiological indices. In addition to the most commonly  
517 used indicators (cortisol, haptoglobin, clinical signs), oxidative stress indicators are  
518 also well correlated with the efficacy of analgesia strategies. For instance, the  
519 multimodal analgesia (local anesthesia + non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) led  
520 to the lowest impact on redox status, thus limiting post-traumatic event (Durand et  
521 al., 2019). Painful procedures similarly induce changes in biochemical markers of  
522 oxidative stress (Ting et al., 2003), and of inflammation such as haptoglobin and  
523 serum amyloid A (Eckersall et al., 2001) in calves and lambs. Oxidative stress  
524 markers have also been proposed as relevant indicators of pain in pigs. In this  
525 species, salivary cortisol, ferric reducing ability of saliva and advanced oxidation  
526 protein products in saliva are correlated with the pain score measured in lame and

527 prolapsed animals (Contreras-Aguilar et al., 2019). These different examples further  
528 highlight the close relationships between stress hormones (cortisol or corticosterone  
529 depending on the species), inflammation and oxidative stress.

### 530 **Conclusion**

531 This review highlights several relationships between redox status and animal  
532 performance and health at critical periods (Fig. 1). Of note, the level of oxidative  
533 stress and its consequences are modulated by additional factors inherent to the  
534 animal (genotype, physiological maturity) and to management practices prior, during  
535 and after the challenges. The data from different species pointed to the central role  
536 of energy metabolism at the origin of pro-oxidative metabolites generation, whereas  
537 the antioxidant capacities orchestrated between various tissues are of importance to  
538 limit their deleterious effects. Therefore, the evaluation of the redox imbalance can  
539 be used as a non-specific but valuable indicator to evaluate the intensity of stressful  
540 events encountered by the animals. When measured before a well-known but  
541 inevitable challenge, it can be used to predict the robustness and more specifically  
542 the resilience of the animal. A synthetic index to estimate oxidative stress would be  
543 thus a valuable tool to rank animals according to risk and to evaluate acute or  
544 long-term effects of management practices on performance and health. However,  
545 this supposes a consensus about the best measures of pro-oxidative and antioxidant  
546 pathways and their interpretation along the productive life. It seems premature to  
547 identify a simple, generic and robust indicator of oxidative stress. However, specific  
548 indicators of the level of oxidative stress and of the level of antioxidants that the

549 animals can mobilise to respond to diverse challenges can be foreseen. They  
550 include the measurement of oxidation products such as lipid oxidation products  
551 (MDA, lipoperoxides), protein oxidation products (carbonyls) and GSH/GSSG ratio  
552 to evaluate the intensity of oxidative processes. Similarly, available antioxidant  
553 defence can be assessed by global test (FRAP, BAP, TAS, TEAC, Cuprac) in blood  
554 or plasma but must likely be associated with measurements of endogenous  
555 (catalase, superoxide dismutase, glutathione peroxidase) enzymatic defenses in  
556 different tissues. To date, there is no gold standard approach between species. In  
557 humans, considering the complexity of redox status evaluation, the 5R redox  
558 principles are recommended with different factors measured at the same time to  
559 achieve real precision (Meng et al., 2021). The development of agro-ecological  
560 practices in farm animals reinforces the needs to better understand the internal  
561 levers from animal physiology to control the level of oxidative stress. Genetic  
562 selection for robustness but also the ability of the animals to self-regulate their  
563 physiology through feeding preferences are possible strategies to be explored and  
564 combined in the future.

#### 565 **Ethics approval**

566 Not applicable

#### 567 **Data and model availability**

568 This review cites data that have been published in peer-reviewed journals or  
569 conference proceedings. For the majority of them, they are not deposited in official

570 repositories. For data referred as unpublished, none of these data were deposited in  
571 an official repository. The data that support the concepts are available from the  
572 authors upon request.

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**Table 1**

Post-natal period events with increased oxidative process in pigs, ruminants, poultry and fishes.

Species <sup>1</sup>	Critical stage	Main challenge	Additional challenge	Redox status involvement	Aggravating factors	Levers to limit oxidative stress
Pig	Birth	Hypo- to hyperoxia	Amniotic fluid to colostrum feeding	Blood hydroperoxides ↑ Expression of peroxiredoxins in adipose tissue ↑ Hepatic MDA content ↑	Low BW of piglets	Neonatal diet rich in proteins
Ruminant	Birth	Hypo- to hyperoxia	Amniotic fluid to colostrum feeding	Blood ROS ↑	Feeding newborns with milk replacer	Dietary supplementation of lactating females and calves with antioxidants and selenium
Poultry	Hatching	Hypo- to hyperoxia	Yolk sac to concentrate diet feeding	Lipid peroxidation in skeletal muscles and heart	Long egg storage before incubation Delayed placement of chicks in farms	Short egg storage before incubation Short delay between hatching and placement in farms Dietary supplementation of breeders with antioxidants
Fish	Hatching	Active feeding	Egg yolk to larval diet	Lipid peroxidation ↑ Vitamins A, C and E ↓ GSH/GSSG ↓ Antioxidant enzyme activities ↑	High concentration of long chain n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in diet and animal tissues. Incomplete development of the endogenous antioxidant	Dietary supplementation of broodstock with vitamin A, methionine, selenium

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Abbreviations: GSH = reduced glutathione; GSSG = oxidized glutathione disulphide; MDA = malondialdehyde; ROS = Reactive oxygen species.

<sup>1</sup>Examples in different species are mainly based on our own works, and not an overview of all references. This underlines that depending of the lab history and skills, the used indicators may vary and no systematic studies have been considered for one or more challenges.



**Table 2**

Juvenile transition events with increased oxidative process in pigs and ruminants.

Species <sup>1</sup>	Critical stage	Main challenge	Additional challenge	Redox status involvement	Aggravating factors	Levers to limit oxidative stress
Pig	Weaning	Dietary transition, separation from the mother, social stress	New environment, high rearing density, animal mixing, cold stress	Hydroperoxides in blood and liver ↑ Hepatic MDA content ↑ Glutathione peroxidase activity in liver ↓ Vitamins A and E in blood ↓	Early stage, low BW, additional gut health disorders	Dietary supplementation with antioxidants
Ruminant	Weaning	Dietary transition, separation from the mother	New environment, social stress	Hydroperoxides in exhaled breath condensate ↑		Dietary supplementation with minerals and antioxidants

Abbreviations: MDA = malondialdehyde.

<sup>1</sup>Examples in different species are mainly based on our own works, and not an overview of all references. This also underlined that depending of the labs history and skills, indicators may vary and no systematic studies have been considered for one or more challenges

**Table 3**

Synthesis on dietary methionine deficiency and redox status of pigs, ruminants, poultry and fishes.

Species <sup>1</sup>	Redox status
Pig	Glutathione content in muscles and liver ↓ Antioxidant enzyme activities (catalase, superoxide dismutase or glutathione peroxidase) in muscle and adipose tissues ↑
Ruminant	glutathione peroxidase and glutathione reductase mRNA in placenta
Poultry	Glutathione and vitamin E contents in liver ↓ TBARS value and carbonyl contents in blood ↑ Vitamin E in blood ↓ Antioxidant enzyme activities (Catalase, superoxide dismutase, and glutathione peroxidase) in jejunum ↑
Fish	Glutathione content in plasma and liver ↓ Protein carbonyls in liver ↑ Glutathione transferase- $\pi$ transcript expression in liver, muscle and fry ↑

Abbreviations: TBARS = thiobarbituric acid reactive substances.

<sup>1</sup>Examples in different species are mainly based on our own works, and not an overview of all references. This also underlined that depending of the labs history and skills, indicators may vary and no systematic studies have been considered for one or more challenges

## Figure captions

**Fig. 1.** Schematic representation of the main internal and external factors inducing oxidative stress in pigs, ruminants, poultry or fishes.

High physiological demands  
Birth, weaning      Weaning, starting



Oxidative stress



Environmental challenges  
Heat stress

Oxidative stress



Oxidative stress

Intervention  
Heat



Oxidative stress



Animal deficiencies  
Nutritional challenges