The Voluntary Food Intake of Pigs
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COMPARISON OF THE PERFORMANCE OF FINISHING PIGS FED *AD LIBITUM* FROM EITHER CONVENTIONAL OR SINGLE-PLACE FEEDERS

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INTRODUCTION

Good husbandry practices for the management of the *ad libitum* fed finishing pig have traditionally included ample provision of trough space. However, for several years commercial pig producers in Denmark and the Netherlands have been successfully finishing pigs using hoppers that only allow one pig to feed at a time. Following the introduction of single-place *ad libitum* feeders on to a commercial pig farm in Suffolk, two trials were undertaken to investigate the effect on finishing pig performance of reducing trough space allowances.

METHODS

Each trial used two pens of 18 gilts and two pens of 18 boars. The pigs were housed in a part-slatted finishing house with a high-speed jet ventilation system. Each pen

TABLE 1
Trial 1

	Conventional feeder		Single-place feeder	
	Mean	s.e.	Mean	s.e.
Weight at start (kg)	30·1	0·52	31·3	0·58
Weight at finish (kg)	82·9	1·17	84·4	1·25
Daily live-weight gain (g/day)	747	12	758	15
Food conversion efficiency	2·58	0·16	2·35	0·05
Carcass weight (kg)	63·2	0·89	65·1	1·03
Backfat at $P_1 + P_3$ (mm)	33	0·87	31	0·91

TABLE 2
Trial 2

	Conventional feeder		Single-place feeder	
	Mean	s.e.	Mean	s.e.
Weight at start (kg)	49·7	0·69	44·7	0·57
Weight at finish (kg)	82·4	1·32	79·6	0·76
Daily live-weight gain (g/day)	800	23	820	13
Food conversion efficiency	2·98	0·28	2·49	0·03
Carcass weight (kg)	64·5	0·93	60·9	0·66
Backfat at P_2 (mm)	12·7	0·47	11·6	0·47

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of pigs was allocated either a conventional feeder or a single-place feeder which provided 1800 mm or 300 mm of trough space respectively. The hoppers were positioned in the lying area adjacent to the feeding passage. The pigs were fed a pelleted compound finishing ration containing approximately 50 g oil and 210 g crude protein per kg. Records were made of individual weights at start and finish, carcass weight, backfat at slaughter and the food offered to each pen.

RESULTS

The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

In neither trial were the results for the pigs fed from the single-place feeder significantly different from those for pigs fed from a conventional hopper. Furthermore no effect due to treatment was observed in the variation of growth rates within each pen. It was felt that the increased wastage from the conventional feeder may be responsible for the difference in food conversion efficiences observed.

CONCLUSIONS

The provision of a single-place feeder instead of a conventional *ad libitum* feeder did not have a detrimental effect on finishing pig performance. These findings may be useful to commercial pig producers, as feeders occupy valuable floor space in pig housing.

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