



Behavioural and physiological indicators of welfare in entire male pigs raised in non-mixing versus mixing housing systems

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Conclusions

Slaughter strategy had in the present study a more notorious influence on skin lesions and salivary cortisol than housing system. No significant differences on behaviour were observed between pigs mixed twice after weaning and non-mixed pigs.

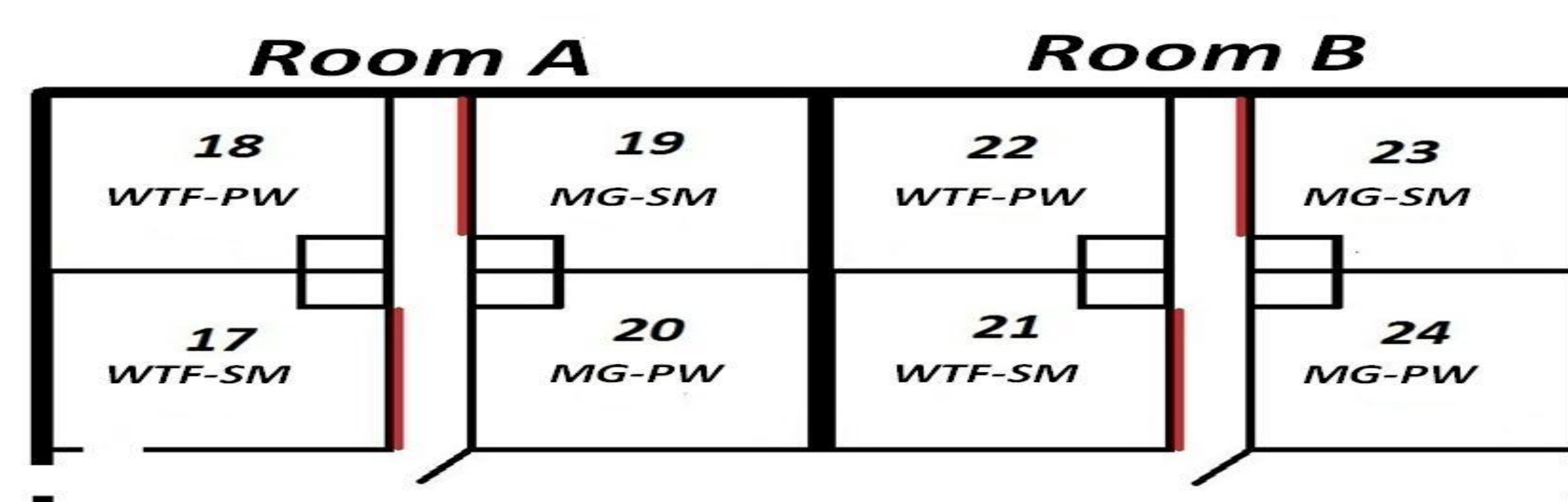
Introduction

Piglet castration and mixing of unfamiliar pigs have been criticized on welfare grounds. Rearing entire males with or without mixing may be an alternative system to surgical castration, but welfare and meat quality (no boar taint) of pigs kept in these systems and slaughtered at heavy weights should be guaranteed.

'The main goal of this study was to evaluate the effect of different entire male housing systems (HS) and slaughter strategies (SS) on physiological and welfare indicators.'

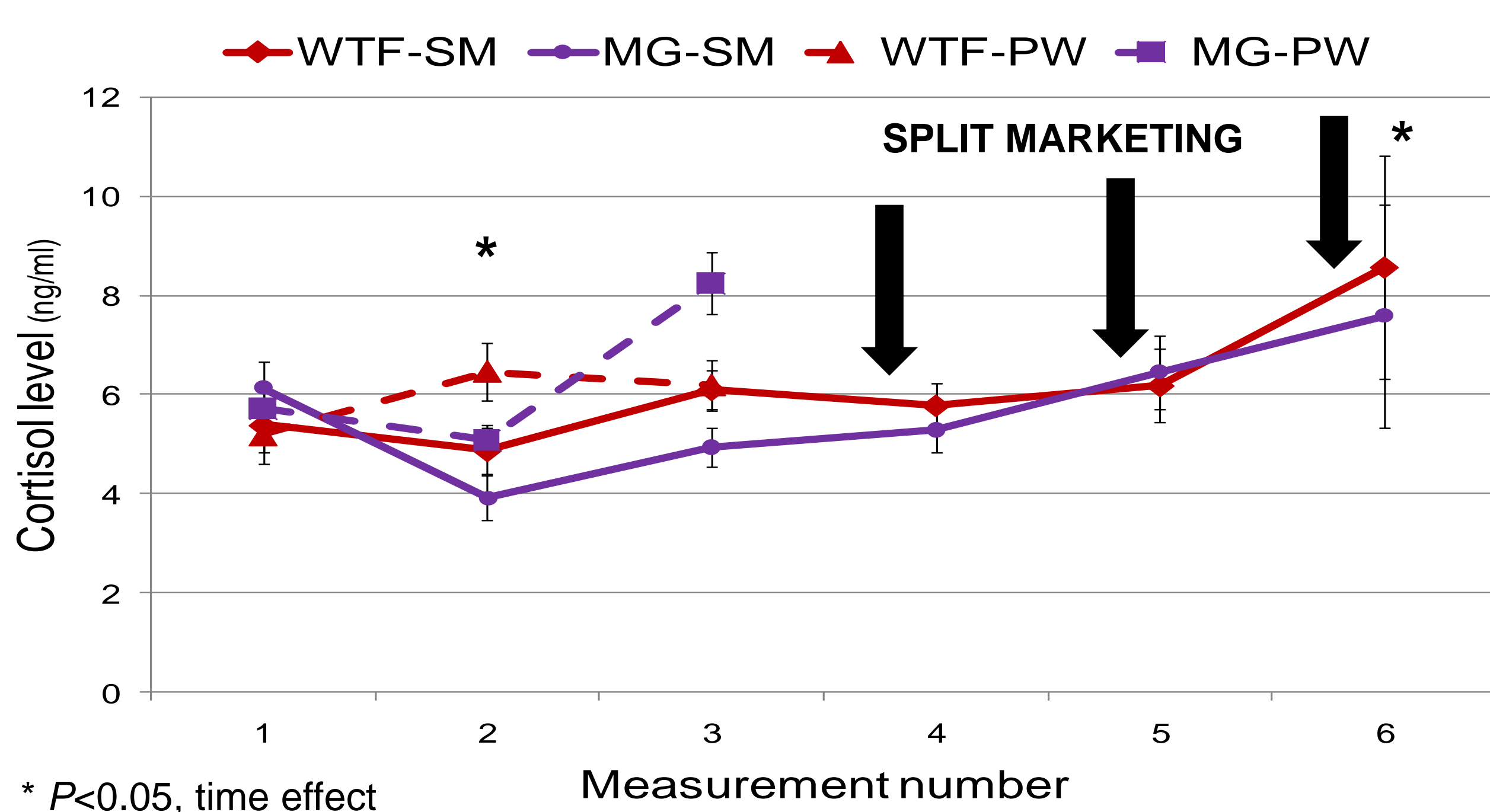
Materials and Methods

- 96 (LWxLD) x Duroc entire male piglets
- Mixing at weaning and growing (MIXED GROUP, MG) or only allowed to cross foster at 10 days (WEANING-TO-FINISH, WTF)
- Slaughter penwise (PW) or by split marketing (SM) at 120kg
- Behaviour observations by scan and focal sampling
- 3 saliva samples (90, 105 and 145 days age) and 2 after SM
- Skin lesions recorded at 75, 90, 105, 125 and 145 days of age

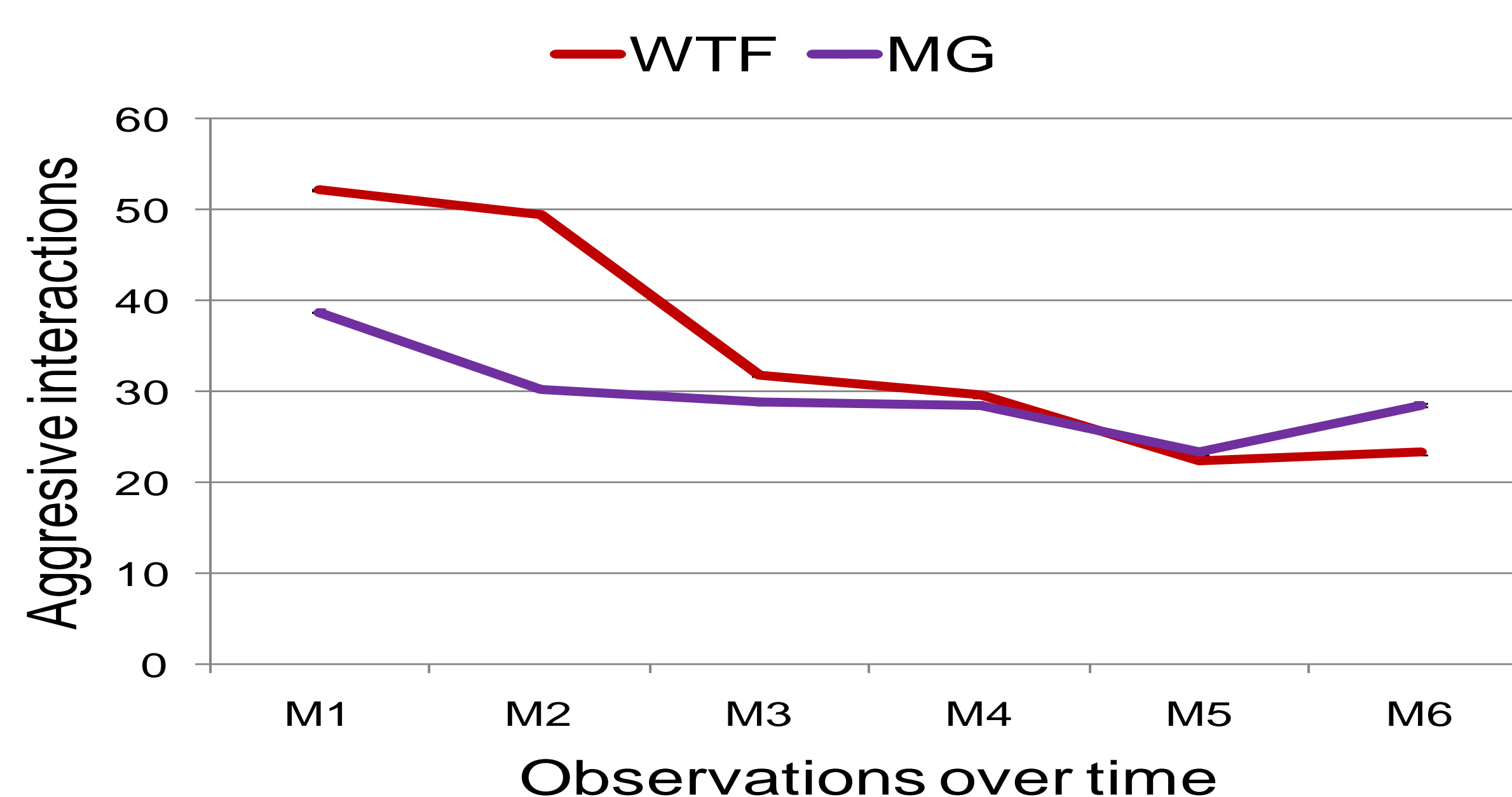


Results

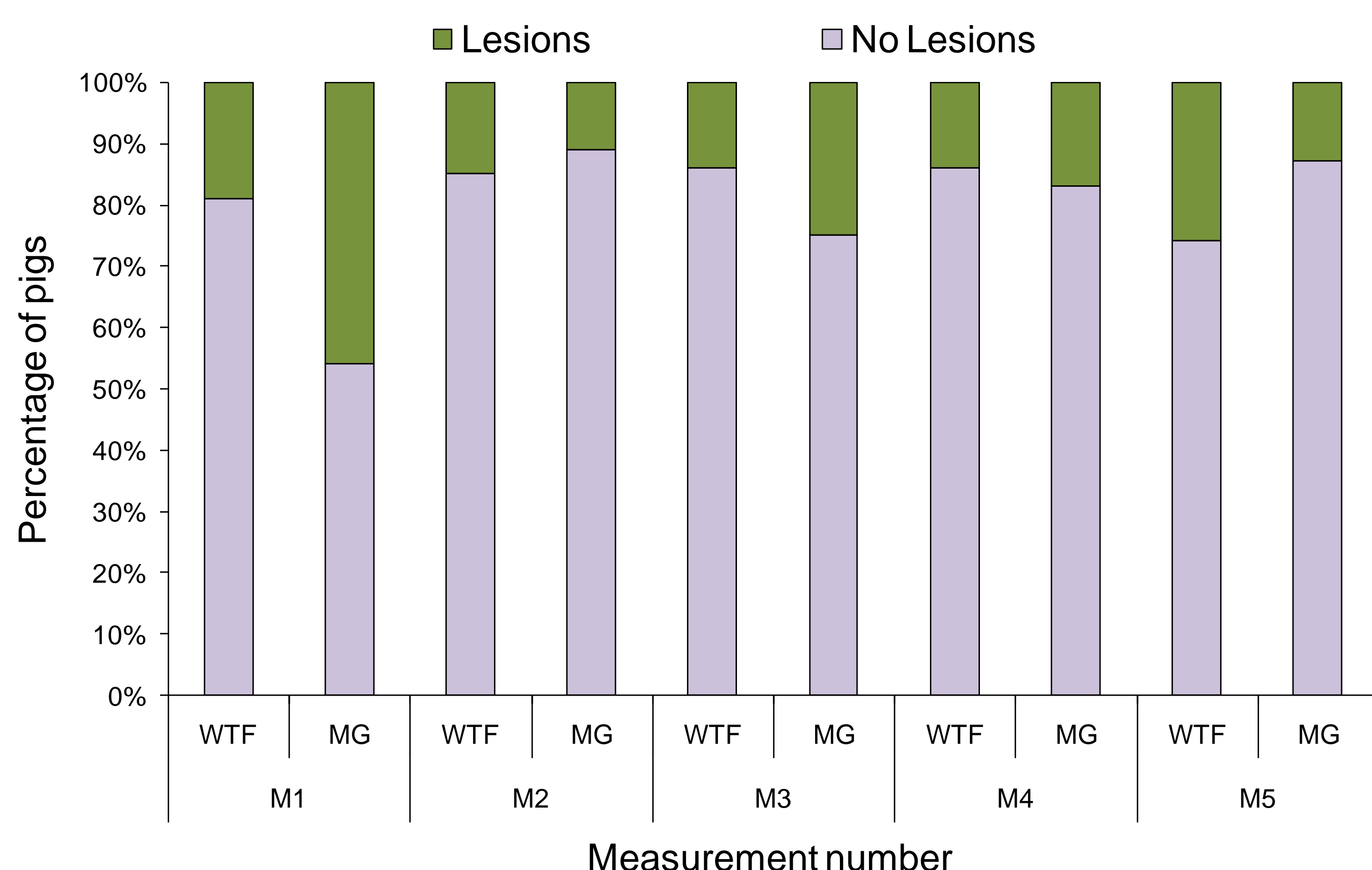
1 Cortisol levels (ng/ml) in saliva for the two housing systems and slaughter strategies (N_{1,2,3}=96/ N₄=36, N₅=24, N₆=12)



2 Mean number per pen of aggressive behaviours for the two housing systems over time (N=96)



3 Skin Lesions according to Welfare Quality® Protocol in the different housing systems (N= 96)



4 Percentage of pigs presenting NO lesions after the two first split marketing batches in the different housing systems (N₁=36 and N₂=24)

