

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL  
FACULDADE DE AGRONOMIA  
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM ZOOTECNIA**

**ESTUDO GENÉTICO QUANTITATIVO DE CARACTERÍSTICAS DE EFICIÊNCIA  
ALIMENTAR EM SUÍNOS TESTADOS EM COMEDOUROS ELETRÔNICOS**

LUCAS DE VARGAS  
ZOOTECNISTA/UFPEL  
MESTRE EM ZOOTECNIA/UFPEL

Porto Alegre (RS), Brasil  
agosto de 2022

LUCAS DE VARGAS

ESTUDO GENÉTICO QUANTITATIVO DE CARACTERÍSTICAS DE EFICIÊNCIA  
ALIMENTAR EM SUÍNOS TESTADOS EM COMEDOUROS ELETRÔNICOS

Tese apresentada como um dos requisitos à obtenção do grau de Doutor em Zootecnia na área de concentração de Produção Animal, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Zootecnia, Faculdade de Agronomia, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Orientador: Prof. Jaime Araujo Cobuci

Coorientador:

Porto Alegre (RS), Brasil

agosto de 2022

CIP - Catalogação na Publicação

DE VARGAS, LUCAS  
ESTUDO GENÉTICO QUANTITATIVO DE CARACTERÍSTICAS DE  
EFICIÊNCIA ALIMENTAR EM SUÍNOS TESTADOS EM COMEDOUROS  
ELETRÔNICOS / LUCAS DE VARGAS. -- 2022.  
71 f.  
Orientador: Jaime Araujo Cobuci.

Tese (Doutorado) -- Universidade Federal do Rio  
Grande do Sul, Faculdade de Agronomia, Programa de  
Pós-Graduação em Zootecnia, Porto Alegre, BR-RS, 2022.

1. consumo alimentar. 2. Landrace. 3. Large White.  
4. modelos de regressão aleatória. I. Araujo Cobuci,  
Jaime, orient. II. Título.

Lucas de Vargas  
Mestre em Zootecnia

### TESE


Submetida como parte dos requisitos  
para obtenção do Grau de

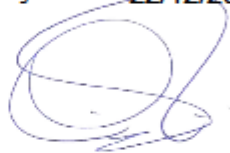
### DOUTOR EM ZOOTECNIA

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Zootecnia  
Faculdade de Agronomia  
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul  
Porto Alegre (RS), Brasil

Aprovada em: 19.08.2022  
Pela Banca Examinadora


Homologado em: 22/12/2022  
Por

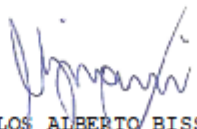
  
JAIME ARAÚJO COBUCCI  
PPG Zootecnia/UFRGS  
Orientador

  
SERGIO LUIZ VIEIRA  
Coordenador do Programa de  
Pós-Graduação em Zootecnia

Jose Braccini Neto  
UFRGS

  
Luiz Fernando Brito  
Purdue University

  
Mônica Corrêa Ledur  
EMBRAPA

  
CARLOS ALBERTO BISSANI  
Diretor da Faculdade de Agronomia

## **Estudo genético quantitativo de características de eficiência alimentar em suínos testados em comedouros eletrônicos**

Autor: Lucas de Vargas

Orientador: Prof. Jaime Araújo Cobuci

### **Resumo:**

O consumo alimentar é a medida mais importante relacionada a eficiência alimentar de suínos. A maneira mais prática para a obtenção das informações de consumo de alimento é através do uso de alimentadores eletrônicos. Todavia, para o cálculo de parâmetros genéticos do consumo alimentar com dados provenientes de alimentadores eletrônicos é preciso que se faça a edição e correção destes dados. Tendo em vista que os alimentadores estão expostos a um ambiente hostil, com umidade e substâncias corrosivas, e ao comportamento agressivo dos suínos, é esperado que hajam medidas discrepantes de consumo alimentar individual, como valores biologicamente impossíveis, valores negativos e a ausência de registro para um consumo real. No primeiro artigo avaliou-se a edição e correção através de três métodos de dados fenotípicos de 962 suínos Large White testados em comedouros eletrônicos, estimou-se parâmetros genéticos para características de eficiência alimentar e avaliou-se o impacto do método de correção na seleção de reprodutores. Componentes de (co)variância foram calculados para conversão alimentar, ganho médio diário e consumo alimentar residual, baseados nos bancos de dados gerados a partir dos três métodos de correção e edição. A correlação genética entre características variou de 0,92 a 0,99. As correlações de rank dos valores genéticos de todos os animais entre os bancos de dados foi alta (acima de 0,94) para todas as características. O percentual de indivíduos selecionados em comum foi alto para o percentil 10% em todas as características (76 a 89%), e valores mais baixos foram encontrados para consumo residual entre os bancos de dados no percentil 5%. O método de correção mais adequado para os dados de consumo alimentar em comedouros eletrônicos é a exclusão de 16 tipos de erros e ajuste do consumo alimentar diário livre de erros através de um modelo misto de regressão linear. No segundo artigo investigou-se através do uso de modelos de regressão aleatória a variação dos parâmetros genéticos e da seleção genética ao longo das semanas de teste com medidas de consumo alimentar tomadas semanalmente ou bissemanalmente. O banco de dados continha 366.504 visitas ao comedouro eletrônico de 922 suínos Landrace testados em um núcleo de genética de uma empresa entre os anos de 2016 e 2021. O consumo médio semanal de cada animal foi medido de um peso vivo médio de 35 kg no início do teste a 120 kg no final. Modelos de regressão aleatória foram utilizados para ajustar o consumo alimentar diário nos dias de teste considerados. Os componentes de (co)variância foram estimados através da máxima verossimilhança restrita, considerando o melhor modelo identificado. Uma comparação foi feita entre o banco de dados de consumos semanais e bissemanais. As herdabilidades foram de moderadas a altas, variando de  $0.61 \pm 0.09$  (3.5

<sup>1</sup>Tese em Zootecnia – Faculdade de Agronomia – Departamento de Zootecnia, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil. (68 p.), agosto, 2022.

dias) a  $0.99 \pm 0.003$  (101.5 dias). As correlações de rank entre valores genéticos dos animais nos dois bancos de dados foram altas até as 12 semanas. Considerando os animais top 10% as correlações de rank variaram de 0,81 a 0,91 até os 80,5 dias em teste, e de 0,40 a 0,50 após. Utilizar medidas bissemanais de consumo alimentar não afetou os parâmetros genéticos utilizando modelos de regressão aleatória.

**Palavras-chave:** consumo alimentar, Landrace, Large White, modelos de regressão aleatória.

## **Quantitative genetic study of feed efficiency traits in swine tested in electronic feeders<sup>2</sup>**

Author: Lucas de Vargas

Advisor: Prof. Jaime Araújo Cobuci

### **Abstract**

The feed intake is the most important trait related to the feed efficiency of swine. The most practical way for the obtainment of feed intake information is through the use of electronic feeders. However for the estimation of genetic parameters of feed intake with data from electronic feeders, editing and correcting the data is necessary. As the electronic feeders are exposed to a hostile environment, with humidity and corrosive substances and the aggressive behavior of pigs, outliers in the measurements of individual feed intake are expected to be found, as biologically impossible measures, negative values and the absence of feed intake information in some visits to the feeder. In the first paper the objective was to evaluate phenotypic data editing and three correction methods in data from Large White pigs tested in electronic feeders, estimate genetic parameters for feed efficiency traits, and evaluate the impact of the correction method on selection of breeding candidates. Feed intake data from 962 Large White boars was used to evaluate the impact of data editing and correction of phenotypic records based on different methods. Variance and covariance components were calculated for feed conversion ratio, average daily feed intake, and residual feed intake based on the datasets generated after editing and correction. The genetic correlation between traits ranged from 0.92 to 0.99. Rank correlations of estimated breeding values (EBVs) of all animals across datasets were high (above 0.94) for all traits. The percentage of commonly-selected individuals was high for 10% percentile in all traits (76% to 89%), and the lowest values were found for RFI between datasets in the 5% percentile. The recommended correction method for the data would be the exclusion of 16 error types and adjustment of the error-free daily feed intake. For the second paper the aim was to investigate the variation of the genetic parameters of feed intake over the weeks of test and to determine if changing the recording of measurements from weekly to bi-weekly affects the variance of the trait and the genetic selection of the animals. The dataset contained 366,504 records of individual visits to an electronic feeder of 922 Landrace boars tested in a nucleus herd of a breeding company between the years of 2016 and 2021. Mean weekly feed intake from each pig was measured from a mean body weight of 35 kg at the start of the test and of 120.0 kg at the end. Random regression analyses were performed to fit the average daily feed intake into the days in test considered. The (co)variance components were estimated via average information restricted maximum likelihood, considering the best model identified. A comparison was performed considering a full dataset and the dataset with the DFI

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D. thesis in Animal Science – Faculdade de Agronomia, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil. (129 p.), April, 2022.

recorded bi-weekly. The DFI heritabilities were moderate to high, ranging from  $0.61 \pm 0.09$  (DIT 3.5) to  $0.99 \pm 0.003$  (DIT 101.5). Adjacent DFI measure were strongly genetically correlated, with coefficients ranging from  $0.78 \pm 0.03$  to  $0.99 \pm 0.0001$ . The correlation estimates were near zero between distant DIT. The Spearman correlations between EBV obtained in the genetic evaluations performed in the full and censored data sets, were strong until 12 weeks (above 0.80). When considering the top 10% animals for 3.5 days in test, the correlations ranged from 0.80 to 0.91 until 80.5 days in test, and from 0.40 to 0.50 after 80.5 days in test. Using bi-weekly measures of DFI does not affect the genetic parameter estimates using random regression models.

**Key words:** daily feed intake, Landrace, Large white, random regression models



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## **CAPÍTULO I - INTRODUÇÃO**

## 1. INTRODUÇÃO

A alimentação corresponde a mais da metade dos custos de produção nos sistemas intensivos de produção de suínos. Desta forma, a seleção de animais capazes de aproveitarem de maneira mais eficiente o alimento fornecido (melhor conversão alimentar) impacta fortemente no retorno financeiro do sistema. Características de eficiência alimentar são complexas e de difícil mensuração, porém, com grande impacto econômico aos suinocultores. No passado, os entraves tecnológicos para obtenção das medidas de consumo de alimento individual impossibilitavam a obtenção de dados acurados (KNAP; WANG, 2012).

A seleção para animais com maior eficiência alimentar pode ser feita de duas maneiras. A primeira é via seleção indireta, através da seleção para diminuição da gordura na carcaça, e a segunda através da seleção direta, utilizando as informações de consumo de alimento e ganho de peso. É necessário, entretanto, observar que a seleção para uma característica isoladamente pode ser contraproducente do ponto de vista econômico, uma vez que esta pode ser negativamente associada com outras características de interesse (PATIENCE; ROSSONI-SERÃO; GUTIÉRREZ, 2015).

A maneira mais prática para a obtenção das informações de consumo de alimento é através do uso de alimentadores eletrônicos. Diversos estudos têm sido feitos utilizando dados provenientes dos alimentadores com objetivo de encontrar os parâmetros genéticos da eficiência alimentar em suínos, bem como as relações dessas características com as demais características de interesse econômico (CASEY, 2003; JIAO et al., 2014a; LU et al., 2017; SHIRALI; VARLEY; JENSEN, 2018).

Todavia, para o cálculo de parâmetros genéticos do consumo alimentar com dados provenientes de alimentadores eletrônicos é preciso que se faça a edição e correção destes dados. Tendo em vista que os alimentadores estão expostos a um ambiente hostil, com umidade e substâncias corrosivas, e ao comportamento agressivo dos suínos, é esperado que haja medidas discrepantes de consumo alimentar individual, como valores biologicamente impossíveis, valores negativos e a ausência de registro para um consumo real (CASEY; STERN; DEKKERS, 2005).

Ademais, os alimentadores automáticos apresentam a limitação de possibilitarem o teste de um pequeno número de animais por um período longo, o que aumenta o custo por animal dos testes de consumo. Uma alternativa a esta problemática são as estratégias de intercalar grupos de animais em teste em um mesmo alimentador, possibilitando com que o dobro de animais sejam testados em um mesmo período. Contudo essa estratégia requer que não haja alteração dos padrões de consumo dos animais testados, e consequentemente dos parâmetros genéticos dessa característica (GRIGNOLA et al., 2002).

Uma alternativa à abordagem mais simples para avaliação de medidas longitudinais, através de médias, é o uso de modelos de regressão aleatória (MRA), onde todos os dados dos animais são usados simultaneamente e proporcionam a estimação de curvas de parâmetros individuais e populacionais. Essa abordagem tem sido amplamente utilizada em vacas de leite para as medidas repetidas do controle leiteiro (SCHAEFFER, 2004).

É comum a prática de exclusão de *outliers* nos dados gerados nos comedouros eletrônicos utilizados por empresas de genética suína. Porém, nem sempre há a implementação de métodos de correção a estes dados, de maneira que animais que apresentaram muitos erros durante o período acabem tendo seu consumo de alimento artificialmente diminuído. Há também por parte da indústria um crescente interesse no uso de estações de teste de consumo com comedouros eletrônicos de maneira intercalada, a fim de maximizar o uso das instalações, e aumentar o número de animais testados.

Este estudo tem por objetivo a estimação dos parâmetros genéticos para as diversas características de eficiência alimentar, bem como das características de crescimento e carcaça, e as relações entre elas utilizando-se de diferentes métodos de edição e correção dos dados de consumo de maneira a investigar se o uso de diferentes métodos de correção altera a seleção genética dos animais testados. Também busca encontrar modelos de regressão aleatória que melhor se ajustem aos dados para predição dos valores genéticos dos animais para o consumo alimentar com medidas completas e intercaladas, e ainda avaliar o efeito do uso intercalado dos alimentadores na seleção dos animais. Os resultados esperados são os de possibilitar que a seleção dos suínos para características de eficiência alimentar seja mais acurada, e que o uso dos alimentadores seja feito de maneira mais eficiente, maximizando o número de animais em teste em um menor período de tempo.

## **CAPÍTULO II – REVISÃO BIBLIOGRÁFICA**



## **2. REVISÃO BIBLIOGRÁFICA**

### **2.1. Importância econômica da produção de suínos**

A carne suína é a mais importante fonte de proteína animal do planeta, com uma produção total estimada para 2022 de mais de 110 milhões de toneladas de equivalente carcaça. O Brasil se consolidou como o quarto maior produtor de carne suína mundial, atrás de China, União Europeia e Estados Unidos, com uma produção estimada para 2022 de 4,34 milhões de toneladas em equivalente carcaça, sendo aproximadamente 70% desta produção destinada a atender a demanda interna do país (USDA, 2022).

Se por um lado o consumo doméstico de carne suína se mantém estável desde 2018, variando de 3 a 3,1 milhões de toneladas de equivalente carcaça, por outro lado, o consumo per capita de carne suína passou de 12 kg/hab/ano em 2006 para mais de 14 kg/hab/ano em 2022. Apesar desse aumento, a média de consumo de carne suína no Brasil é até três vezes inferior à de outros países como China e países da União Europeia(USDA, 2022).

Apesar da estabilização no consumo interno, a produção de carne suína no Brasil cresce a cada ano, havendo um aumento de produção de 1,5 milhão de toneladas em equivalente de carcaça entre os anos de 2006 e 2022, o que demonstra o potencial do país em ter uma participação cada vez maior no mercado mundial de carne suína(USDA, 2022).

### **2.2. Eficiência alimentar**

Uma definição comumente utilizada para a eficiência alimentar na literatura científica é o ganho de peso por unidade de alimento consumido. Na prática, o que realmente é medido é o desaparecimento de alimento nos alimentadores, uma vez que medir o que é de fato consumido pode ser inviável. Esta medida pode não ser precisa devido às particularidades dos alimentadores, estimando-se que as diferenças entre desaparecimento de alimento e alimento consumido podem variar de 10 a 30%, e sendo, portanto, necessários ajustes nas medidas de desaparecimento (PATIENCE; ROSSONI-SERÃO; GUTIÉRREZ, 2015).

O consumo de alimento é uma das características de maior importância a ser medida, pois tem papel crucial na variação do peso vivo e da composição das carcaças

dos suínos. O crescimento proteico responde linearmente ao consumo de alimento até que um platô seja atingido. Com maiores consumos de alimento, o platô pode ser atingido pelos animais mais precocemente, e o limite máximo de ganho proteico por dia parece ser bastante consistente mesmo em diferentes pesos vivos, portanto, a ideia de que o animal aumenta seu potencial de crescimento em massa magra por dia à medida em que aumenta o peso vivo não se sustenta (WHITTEMORE, 1986).

A influência da variação do peso dos animais cuja eficiência alimentar é medida também é um fator importante a ser considerado, uma vez que à medida em que o peso se altera, se alteram também os requerimentos para manutenção. Genótipos superiores ou diferentes sexos podem apresentar maiores taxas de crescimento, tendo o macho inteiro um potencial muito maior para o ganho de músculo que as demais categorias. É plausível, portanto, o uso de modelos que ajustem as medidas de eficiência alimentar pelo peso metabólico dos animais (PATIENCE, 2012).

A avaliação da eficiência alimentar em termos de ganho de carcaça em vez de peso vivo pode ser uma alternativa interessante, uma vez que a carcaça é o produto que de fato tem valor econômico. A ingestão de dietas baseadas em subprodutos da indústria alimentícia, como cascas e bagaços é uma tendência atual, visto o elevado custo das matérias primas tradicionais para produção de ração. Essa mudança na dieta está associada a mudanças nos rendimentos de carcaça, o que pode impactar diretamente o lucro líquido por animal. A diminuição nos rendimentos de carcaça se deve à adaptação dos animais às dietas fibrosas, através do aumento de volume e peso do sistema digestivo. A tomada da medida de rendimento de carcaça *in vivo* no início do período de teste, entretanto, é de difícil obtenção (JØRGENSEN, 1996; PATIENCE, 2012).

### **2.3. Alimentadores automáticos**

Testar a performance da eficiência alimentar de animais para seleção genética sempre foi uma prática cara e consumidora de tempo, devido à necessidade de monitoramento constante e acurado do peso vivo e quantidade de alimento consumido. Na prática, a coleta dos dados se reflete em uma atividade extremamente trabalhosa e sujeita a erros humanos, além da influência da atividade humana frequente no comportamento dos animais (SLADER; GREGORY, 1988).

Sistemas de gaiola individuais se estabeleceram como a solução tradicional para a coleta de dados acurados de consumo. Entretanto, estudos demonstram que esse sistema pode provocar anormalidades no comportamento alimentar dos suínos, e suas taxas de crescimento são superiores às de animais criados em grupos. Além disso, o custo elevado e a necessidade de espaço para as gaiolas são fatores desencorajadores (DE HAER; DE VRIES, 1993; PATTERSON, 1985).

Com objetivo de combinar o alojamento dos animais em grupos com a coleta de medidas individuais, respeitando a influência da interação e competição por alimento entre os animais, as estações de alimentação automática foram desenvolvidas. As estações consistem em um comedouro suspenso com reservatório de alimento, um mecanismo de detecção dos animais que entram na estação e uma antena para gravar suas identificações. Uma balança grava a medida de alimento que desaparece do comedouro durante a visita de um animal (DE HAER et al., 1992). A estação de alimentação grava a medida do peso do comedouro e hora no momento do início e fim da visita do suíno, juntamente com a identificação do mesmo, número da baia e data. Uma visita se inicia quando o equipamento detecta o transponder de um animal, e termina quando o sinal do transponder não é mais identificado (EISSEN et al., 1998).

Atualmente, estações de alimentação automática que gravam o consumo são amplamente utilizadas na obtenção de dados de consumo em suínos, e proporcionam diversos estudos sobre os parâmetros genéticos da eficiência alimentar (PATIENCE; ROSSONI-SERÃO; GUTIÉRREZ, 2015; SHIRALI; VARLEY; JENSEN, 2018). A inclusão das medidas do consumo médio diário (CMD) provenientes das estações FIRE© proporcionou ganhos genéticos 17% maiores na conversão alimentar (CA) de uma população de suínos Duroc, demonstrando que há um ganho genético substancial quando são incluídas essas medidas no índice de seleção (CHENG et al., 2019).

#### **2.4. Correção de erros de comedouros automáticos**

Apesar das vantagens na utilização dos alimentadores automáticos, estes não são imunes à presença de erros nos dados obtidos. Os principais problemas que ocasionam pesagens não acuradas estão relacionados ao ambiente hostil ao qual os equipamentos estão submetidos, com umidade, sujeira e gases corrosivos. Além disso, o

comportamento agressivo dos suínos também proporciona o acontecimento de falhas (CASEY; DEKKERS, 2002).

Eissen et al. (1998) desenvolveram algoritmos que possibilitam a identificação de erros em alimentadores automáticos IVOG® durante o período de teste. Os erros encontrados nos dados provenientes dos alimentadores foram divididos em erros tipo A (visitas não identificadas, quando um transponder não pode ser lido pelo alimentador ou o sinal é ruim) e tipo B (erros relacionados à pesagem do alimento). Nove algoritmos para a identificação de erros tipo B foram desenvolvidos. Em um estudo posterior, aventou-se a possibilidade de que a simples exclusão de medidas contendo estes erros não afetasse a obtenção da medida de consumo alimentar por animal, quando comparado à exclusão e ajuste dos dados. Dessa hipótese conclui-se que apesar de a simples exclusão ser uma boa alternativa, o uso de regressões polinomiais de primeiro grau é recomendado para o ajuste dos dados. (EISSEN; DE HAAN; KANIS, 1999)

Casey et al. (2005), sistematizaram a identificação de erros através de 16 critérios objetivos a serem aplicados ao banco de dados. Através desses critérios é possível modelar as medidas de consumo de animais que foram perdidas devido a ocorrência de erros, utilizando a frequência e o tipo do erro ocorrido como covariáveis em um modelo. Casey & Dekkers (2002) comparando este método com quatro métodos alternativos, um com a simples exclusão de *outliers* de consumo de alimento, e três com versões simplificadas da exclusão de erros identificados pelos 16 critérios, verificaram que a escolha do método de correção dos dados influencia a acurácia dos dados provenientes de alimentadores automáticos, e que o método que utiliza as informações de erros como covariáveis em um modelo linear proporciona os melhores resultados para a característica de consumo alimentar diário.

Em um trabalho mais recente, Ito et al. (2018) testaram diferentes equações para correção de consumos de alimento diário faltantes. Os critérios para a exclusão de visitas foram: consumo de alimento  $<-300$  g e  $>1500$  g; tempo de ocupação  $<0$ s e  $>2$ h, e para a exclusão de consumos diários: consumo total  $<0$ g ou  $>10$ kg. As equações testadas foram polinomiais quadráticas, polinomiais ortogonais de quarto grau, e a regressão não paramétrica polinomial local (Loess). Simulando de 5 a 50% de medidas de consumo diário faltantes em um banco de dados, os autores observaram que a equação não

paramétrica de Loess é o método mais útil para corrigir medidas faltantes de consumo de um animal, e que a correção destes valores faltantes afeta as acurácias dos parâmetros genéticos e dos valores genéticos.

## **2.5. Parâmetros genéticos da eficiência alimentar**

Entre os estudos desenvolvidos com parâmetros genéticos da eficiência alimentar em suínos pode-se destacar como um dos principais, por seu pioneirismo e importância dos resultados, o desenvolvido por Bernard & Fahmy (1970). Nesse estudo foram selecionadas três diferentes linhagens de suínos Yorkshire, uma para utilização de alimento (conversão alimentar), uma para escore de carcaça (espessura de gordura, comprimento de carcaça e área de olho de lombo) e uma última para as duas características combinadas. As herdabilidades relatadas foram de 0,16 (0,18) e 0,43 (0,19), para utilização de alimento e escore de carcaça respectivamente, contudo, o principal resultado consiste na correlação genética negativa (-0,55) entre as duas características. Esse resultado foi interpretado como evidência de que a seleção para animais com melhor conversão alimentar é passível de implementação indireta através da seleção para animais mais magros. Essa seleção, porém, só é possível até a obtenção de uma carcaça com determinados padrões de carcaça economicamente ótimos, a partir dos quais um platô será atingido para a conversão alimentar (PATIENCE; ROSSONI-SERÃO; GUTIÉRREZ, 2015).

Em estudos posteriores, Bereskin (1986) também investigou o papel genético no melhoramento da eficiência da conversão alimentar, estimando parâmetros para essa e outras características de animais Duroc e Yorkshire na fase de crescimento e terminação. As 1.869 medidas individuais, provenientes de gaiolas metabólicas, foram analisadas através de análises de variância e as herdabilidades encontradas foram de 0,01 (0,07), 0,105 (0,21) e 0,06 (0,22) para as características de GMD, CD e CA, respectivamente. Os coeficientes de herdabilidade encontrados foram muito baixos, e diversos outros estudos já foram realizados com essas características em suínos desde então.

Aplicando a máxima verossimilhança restrita (REML) ao modelo animal, Hermes & Luxford (HERMESCH; LUXFORD; GRASER, 2000a) encontraram estimativas de

herdabilidade para as características GMD, CD e CA de 0,13 (0,04), 0,23 (0,04) e 0,15 (0,04), respectivamente, em uma população de suínos Large White e Landrace. Em um estudo com 5601 machos suínos de uma linhagem materna Schulze et al. (2002) visualizaram a oscilação das estimativas de herdabilidade do CD durante as semanas de teste entre 0,12, 0,23, 0,29, 0,39, 0,32 e 0,39 para a primeira, terceira, quinta, sétima e nona, respectivamente. As herdabilidades encontradas para GMD, CD e CA apresentaram valores de 0,36 (0,04), 0,39 (0,03) e 0,28 (0,04), respectivamente.

As correlações genéticas encontradas por Hermesch & Luxford (2000b) para a CA foram de -0,48 (0,21) e 0,19 (0,27) com GMD e CD, respectivamente, e entre CD e GMD de 0,82 (0,11). Os resultados encontrados por Schulze et al. (2002) seguem tendência similar. A CA apresentou-se negativamente correlacionada ao GMD ( $-0,25 \pm 0,08$ ) e positivamente ao consumo diário (CD) ( $0,51 \pm 0,06$ ), que por sua vez apresentou correlação de 0,71 (0,03) ao GMD. O CD na sétima semana apresentou forte correlação com o CD de todo o período ( $0,87 \pm 0,01$ ). A correlação entre as medidas nas diferentes semanas foi de moderada a baixa, diminuindo com o aumento do intervalo entre as mesmas.

Em um estudo com características de eficiência alimentar de 14.901 machos Duroc provenientes de estações FIRE, Lu et al. (2017) encontraram herdabilidades de 0,54 (0,04), 0,44 (0,04), 0,19 (0,03) e 0,31 (0,01) para CAR, CA, CD e GMD. Além dessas, foram estimados os valores para características de ganho de peso residual ( $0,46 \pm 0,04$ ), ganho de peso residual por consumo residual ( $0,57 \pm 0,03$ ). As características de eficiência alimentar apresentaram correlações positivas de fraca a moderadas ao GMD.

## **2.6. Modelos de Regressão Aleatória**

Os MRA possibilitam dividir a curva de consumo de alimento em uma parte fixa, com a curva média do consumo, e uma parte aleatória (desvios da média). A vantagem do uso de MRA em relação à abordagem de tratar cada medida longitudinal como uma característica diferente é que além dos valores genéticos é possível modelar o efeito de ambiente permanente comum a todas as medidas de um animal, e as estruturas de covariância temporárias residuais. A regressão aleatória pode ser obtida através de polinômios de Legendre ou funções de *splines*, e dentro de cada abordagem é possível

testar diversas possibilidades para encontrar um modelo que melhor se ajuste aos dados (BERMEJO et al., 2003; CAI; KAISER; DEKKERS, 2011).

Com objetivo de desenvolver métodos estatísticos para análise de dados longitudinais de consumo utilizando MRA, Bermejo et al. (2003) combinaram diferentes modelos e estruturas de covariância para os efeitos de ambiente permanente. A estrutura de média-auto-regressiva-móvel de primeira ordem (1,1) explicou de maneira mais satisfatória o declínio na correlação entre as medidas ao longo do tempo. As estimativas de herdabilidade encontradas foram baixas e variaram de 0,02 a 0,06, com os maiores valores sendo observados nas semanas finais.

Cai et al. (2011a), encontraram ajustes melhores para o CD com modelos de splines com maior número de nós (10), quando comparados a números de nós inferiores ou modelos com polinômios de Legendre. As estimativas de herdabilidade do CD foram superiores no modelo utilizando splines com 10 nós, com tendência de aumento ao passar do tempo, variando de 0,10 a 0,37.

Alternativamente à modelagem do peso sobre o consumo de alimento, é possível utilizar um modelo bicaracterística de regressão aleatória incluindo ambos o peso e o alimento medidos longitudinalmente, o qual pode considerar simultaneamente mudanças nas variâncias genéticas e residuais em cada uma das características ao longo do tempo. Wetten et al. (2012), utilizando essa abordagem em suínos Duroc e Landrace, encontraram estimativas de herdabilidade para o CA variando de 0,09 a 0,11, diminuindo ao longo do tempo. Outros resultados obtidos sugerem que o peso vivo é mais geneticamente correlacionado ao consumo de alimento nos períodos iniciais de crescimento, o que pode ser explicado devido ao peso ser uma medida cumulativa de crescimento, e provavelmente fortemente afetado pelo consumo na fase mais intensa de crescimento.

## **2.7. Estratégias de uso dos alimentadores**

As várias medidas de consumo diário registradas para cada indivíduo durante o período de teste nos alimentadores eletrônicos podem ser usadas para modelar a trajetória do consumo alimentar ao longo do tempo através de modelos de regressão aleatória. A obtenção dessas medidas de animais em um regime alimentar contínuo

acaba por limitar a capacidade de testagem de animais por baia. Como alternativa, o uso da estratégia de alternar grupos de animais entre comedouros tradicionais e alimentadores eletrônicos pode duplicar o número de animais testados em um mesmo período, obtendo-se medidas bi-semanais para cada grupo (GRIGNOLA et al., 2002).

Eissen et al. (1999) testaram o efeito de deletar aleatoriamente as medidas de consumo diário de um animal na estimativa do consumo alimentar médio. Utilizando-se equações polinomiais de primeiro grau, a deleção de até 70% dos consumos diários diminui a correlação entre o consumo alimentar médio verdadeiro e estimado de 1 para 0,96, indicando que é possível prever períodos do teste de consumo nos quais não foram registradas medidas para os animais.

Neste sentido, Schulze et al. (2001) testaram a aplicabilidade prática de testar periodicamente os animais nos alimentadores eletrônicos, intercalando com comedouros tradicionais semanalmente. Comparando dois grupos de animais, o primeiro testado continuamente e o segundo bi-semanalmente. Foram encontradas diferenças significativas entre os consumos alimentares diários medidos nos dois grupos, bem como nas características de comportamento alimentar. As herdabilidades e correlações genéticas entre o consumo alimentar e características de crescimento e comportamento alimentar foram diferentes para os dois grupos. Estes resultados sugerem que há forte influência no consumo alimentar da adaptação dos animais ao alimentador eletrônico sempre que os mesmos são novamente introduzidos a ele, e portanto, o regime contínuo de teste de consumo é o mais indicado para a obtenção de dados confiáveis.



### **3. HIPÓTESES E OBJETIVOS**

#### **3.1. Hipóteses**

- a) Os diferentes métodos de correção das medidas de consumo não alteram a estimação dos parâmetros genéticos e nem tem impacto na seleção genética dos animais.
- b) Os modelos de regressão aleatória explicam de maneira acurada o comportamento dos parâmetros genéticos para o consumo alimentar ao longo do tempo.
- c) O uso de medidas intercaladas semanalmente não afeta a seleção genética dos animais com base nos valores genéticos para as características consumo médio diário, conversão alimentar e conversão alimentar residual.

#### **3.2. Objetivos**

- a) Estimar os parâmetros genéticos para as características consumo médio diário, conversão alimentar e conversão alimentar residual, bem como as correlações entre essas, utilizando três diferentes abordagens de edição e correção dos dados.
- b) Avaliar se a escolha do método de correção dos dados de consumo influencia a seleção genética dos suínos.
- c) Testar o ajuste de diferentes modelos de regressão aleatória para obtenção acurada das estimativas de parâmetros genéticos e da predição dos valores genéticos do consumo alimentar.
- d) Predizer valores genéticos para as características de consumo alimentar utilizando dados completos e intercalados semanalmente.
- e) Avaliar se o uso de dados intercalados semanalmente influencia a seleção genética pela alteração na classificação dos animais.

**CAPÍTULO III – EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT METHODS OF CORRECTION OF DAILY  
FEED INTAKE ON GENETIC PARAMETERS AND PREDICTED BREEDING VALUES  
FOR FEED EFFICIENCY-RELATED TRAITS IN LARGE WHITE PIGS<sup>1</sup>**

#### **4. Effects of different methods of correction of daily feed intake on genetic parameters and predicted breeding values for feed efficiency-related traits in Large White pigs**

Lucas de Vargas<sup>ae</sup>, Luciana Salles de Freitas<sup>b</sup>, Daniel Duarte da Silveira<sup>c</sup>, Gabriel Soares Campos<sup>d</sup>, Jaime Araujo Cobuci<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup>Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Avenida Bento Gonçalves, 7712, 91509-900, RS, Brasil.

<sup>b</sup>DB Genética Suína, 2094, Av. Juscelino Kubischek de Oliveira, Patos de Minas, MG 38700-156, Brasil.

<sup>c</sup>Departamento de Zootecnia, Universidade Federal de Pelotas, 96160-000 Pelotas, RS, Brasil

<sup>d</sup>Departamento de Zootecnia, Faculdade de Ciências Agrárias e Veterinárias, Universidade Estadual Paulista, 14884-900, Jaboticabal, SP, Brazil

<sup>e</sup>Corresponding author. e-mail: lucasrincao@gmail.com, phone: +55 53 999950269

**ABSTRACT:**

Genetic improvement of feed efficiency in pigs require reliable estimates of genetic and phenotypic parameters. The main objectives of this study were to evaluate phenotypic data editing and three correction methods in data from Large White pigs tested in electronic feeders, estimate genetic parameters for feed efficiency traits, and evaluate the impact of the correction method on selection of breeding candidates. Feed intake data from 962 Large White boars was used to evaluate the impact of data editing and correction of phenotypic records based on different methods. Variance and covariance components were calculated for feed conversion ratio (FCR), average daily feed intake (ADFI), and residual feed intake (RFI) based on the datasets generated after editing and correction. The genetic correlation between traits ranged from 0.92 to 0.99. Rank correlations of estimated breeding values (EBVs) of all animals across datasets were high (above 0.94) for all traits. The percentage of commonly-selected individuals was high for 10% percentile in all traits (76% to 89%), and the lowest values were found for RFI between datasets in the 5% percentile. The recommended correction method for the data would be the exclusion of 16 error types and adjustment of the error-free daily feed intake (DFI).

**Key words:** correction methods, feed efficiency, genetic parameter, pig, rank correlation.

## **Introduction**

In modern pork production systems, feed represents the majority of the total cost, and therefore, feed efficiency is directly related to the swine industry profitability (Patience et al., 2015). Reliable estimates of genetic and phenotypic parameters are essential for genetically improving feed efficiency traits, which is directly related with accurate phenotypic records of individual feed intake. Electronic feeders used in group-housed pigs are preferred in comparison to individual collection of feed intake in individually-housed pigs, as the progeny of selected animals are usually group housed in commercial conditions. Furthermore, individually-housed pigs show different feeding behaviors, grow faster and get fatter, compared to group housed pigs (Bereskin, 1986; de Haer and Merks, 1992; de Haer and de Vries, 1993; Casey, 2003).

The electronic swine feeder automatically measures individual feed intake in group-housed pigs, identifying each pig's visit through an electronic ear tag and calculating feed intake as the difference in feed weight before and after the visit. It also records the number of visits and the total visit time. Using electronic feeders, it is possible to derive measures of feed efficiency and feeding behavior traits. These traits are of direct interest to be incorporated in selection indexes developed by pig breeding companies (de Haer and de Vries, 1993; Casey and Dekkers, 2002). Even though electronic feeders are currently the best solution for individual feed intake recording in pigs, several errors can occur during the data collection, such as abnormal feed intake values or no feed intake recording in some visits. To overcome these problems, several methods have been developed to identify and correct these errors found in the data generated by the feeders (Eissen et al., 1998; Casey et al., 2005). Therefore, the main objectives of this study were to: 1) correct daily feed intake data from Large White pigs tested in electronic feeders using three

methods; 2) estimate genetic parameters for feed intake and feed efficiency traits derived from these datasets; and, 3) assess rank correlations of estimated breeding values (EBVs), percentage of commonly-selected individuals in different percentiles, and accuracies of prediction. The end goal was to evaluate if the editing and correction method used affect genetic selection of feed efficiency traits.

## **Methods**

### **Data**

Phenotypic and pedigree data were obtained from a pig breeding company located in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The original dataset contained 484,972 records of individual visits to the feeder of 962 Large White boars, tested between 2016 and 2020. Body weight and daily feed intake was individually measured in animals with a mean body weight (BW) of 25 kg at the start of the test and of 100 kg at the end. Individual feed intake data were collected using the Feed Intake Recording Equipment (FIRE; Osborne Industries Inc., Osborne, KS, USA) distributed along 23 pens of 12 animals each. The average test period was 11 weeks, and the end of the test was based on the mean BW of the group being approximately 100 kg. The FIRE stations allowed access to feed 24h a day, limiting the entry of one animal at a time per feeder. The animal's total weight gain through the test period (TWG, in Kg) and the average daily gain (ADG, in Kg) were calculated based on the difference between weight at the end of the test and at the beginning. **Data editing**

Feed intake data generated by FIRE stations software were replicated into three identical datasets and used to generate new edited datasets based on different methods for feed intake editing and corrections. The first two datasets were filtered based on the 16 editing criteria

proposed by Casey et al. (2005) and detailed in Table 1, and single visits containing any of these errors were excluded from further analyses. For the third dataset, the six criteria proposed by Ito et al. (2018) were applied for exclusion of single visits (feed intake per visit <300 g and >1500 g; and occupation time per visit <0 s and >2 h) and daily feed intake (<0 g and >10 kg). Animals with less than 50 days of total test period and pens with less than three animals were excluded.

### Data correction

The first dataset (DS-CSY) was corrected based on the method proposed by Casey et al. (2003), in which estimates of coefficients for percentage of the 16 errors, occupation time summed over visits containing specific errors, and feed intake summed over visits containing specific errors, were calculated based on a linear mixed model (Casey et al., 2003):

$$Y_{imnp} = B_i + b_1 BW_{mn} + b_2 ADG_m + \sum_{p=1}^{16} b_{3p} ETP_{pmn} + \sum_{p=1}^2 b_{4p} OTD_{pmn} + \sum_{p=6}^{14} b_{4p} OTD_{pmn} \\ + \sum_{p=4}^5 b_{5p} FID_{pmn} + \sum_{p=15}^{16} b_{5p} FID_{pmn} + A_m + e_{imnp}$$

where  $Y_{imnp}$  is the error-free daily feed intake from the  $m$ th individual collected on the  $n$ th day in the  $i$ th batch;  $B_i$  is the systematic effect of the  $i$ th batch;  $BW_{mn}$  is the body weight of the  $m$ th individual on the  $n$ th day fitted as a linear covariate;  $ADG_m$  is the average daily gain of the  $m$ th individual fitted as a linear covariate;  $ETP_{pmn}$  is the percentage of error type  $p$  for the  $m$ th individual on the  $n$ th day fitted as a linear covariate;  $OTD_{pmn}$  is the daily occupation time, summing over visits from the  $m$ th individual on the  $n$ th day that contained error type  $p$ ;  $FID_{pmn}$  is the daily feed intake summed over visits from the  $m$ th individual on the  $n$ th day that contained error type  $p$  (one of the 16 errors);  $A_m$  is the effect of the  $m$ th pig, which was assumed to be random

with  $A_m \sim N(0, \mathbf{I}\sigma_a^2)$ ; and  $e_{imnp}$  = residual with  $e_{imnp} \sim N(0, \mathbf{I}\sigma_e^2)$ ;  $b$  are the corresponding coefficients. After this step, error-free daily feed intake was adjusted for each pig and day for feed consumed in error visits by adding estimates of covariates.

For the second dataset (DS-NADJ) no adjustments were made, and only measurements without errors (as described in Table 1) were kept for further analyses. The third dataset (DS-ITO) was corrected by fitting a locally weighted regression equation (Loess), to the daily feed intake (DFI) without the six errors, with two degrees of freedom, span of 0.50, and a linear model, as suggested by Ito et al. (2018):

$y_i = g(x_i) + e_i$  where  $y_i$  is the fitted DFI value of the first degree polynomial fitted to the data using weighted least squares with weights of  $w(x_i)$  at each age  $x_i$ ,  $g$  is a smoothing function, and  $e_i$  are random variables with mean 0 and a constant scale.  $w(x_i)$  was calculated as:

$w(x_i) = \left(1 - \left(\frac{x - x_i}{\max|x - x_i|}\right)^3\right)^3$  where  $x$  defines the predictor position where the above model is being evaluated,  $x_i$  defines the measurement position,  $\max|x - x_i|$  is the maximum distance between a predictor point and the measurement point within the fit region, and  $x_i$  is the nearest neighbor of  $x$  within the fit region. All analyses were performed using the software R (R Core Team 2022).

## Traits

Feed conversion ratio (FCR) was calculated as the total feed intake during the test period (TFI), which consisted of the sum of DFI over all the test for an animal divided by the TWG. Average daily feed intake (ADFI) was calculated as TFI divided by the total period of the test. Residual feed intake (RFI), was calculated based on the method proposed by Cai et al.(2008), which consisted of obtaining estimated breeding values (EBVs) for RFI through a single-trait animal



model analysis of ADFI, with fixed effect of contemporary group, and linear covariates of on and off-test BW, on-test age and ADG adjusted to an on-test age of 90 days. After that, RFI was preadjusted for on and off-test BW, and for adjusted ADG, with regression coefficients obtained from the analyses to be used in the 2-trait animal model analysis with the remaining traits to estimate genetic parameters.

### **Estimation of genetic parameters**

Genetic parameters and EBVs for FCR, ADFI, and RFI were estimated using all three corrected datasets and fitting two-trait animal models. Pedigree information tracing back up to five generations was used and included 3,618 animals. Contemporary group (CG) consisted of the nested effect of pen and on-test group. Records of animals in CG with less than four animals, CG with all progeny of a single sire, and records of animals with unknown sire or dam were excluded. The estimation of genetic and residual variances for each trait was performed using the Average Information Restricted Maximum Likelihood (AI-REML) procedure implemented in the AIREMLF90 software (Miszta et al., 2002), according to the following model:

$$y = Xb + Za + e$$

where:  $\mathbf{y}$  is the vector of phenotypic observations (FCR, ADFI, and RFI);  $\mathbf{b}$  is the vector of systematic effects (CG fitted as categorical fixed effect and on-test age as a linear covariate);  $\mathbf{a}$  is the vector of random direct additive genetic effects;  $\mathbf{e}$  is the vector of random residual effects, and  $\mathbf{X}$  and  $\mathbf{Z}$  are incidence matrices that relate  $\mathbf{b}$  and  $\mathbf{a}$  to  $\mathbf{y}$ , respectively. The expectations and variance matrices of the random vectors are described as:

$$E = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{y} \\ \mathbf{a} \\ \mathbf{e} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} X\mathbf{b} \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}; V = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{a} \\ \mathbf{e} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} A \otimes G_0 & 0 \\ 0 & I \otimes R_0 \end{bmatrix}$$

where  $\mathbf{G}_0$  and  $\mathbf{R}_0$  denotes 2x2 matrices containing the direct additive genetic and residual covariance components, respectively;  $\mathbf{A}$  is the numerator relationship matrix;  $\mathbf{I}$  is an identity matrix; and  $\otimes$  is the Kronecker product.

Spearman correlations between the EBVs predicted based on each dataset were estimated using the “cor.test” function of the R software (R Core Team, 2022). The percentage of commonly-selected individuals at two different percentiles (10% and 5%) obtained based on the analyses using the three datasets were compared. The EBV accuracies were calculated as:

$$acc_i = \sqrt{1 - \frac{PEV_i}{(1 + F_i)\sigma_a^2}}$$

where  $PEV_i$  is the prediction error variance for the  $i$ th animal;  $F_i$  is a measure of inbreeding of the  $i$ th animal;  $\sigma_a^2$  is the additive genetic variance. The mean EBV accuracies of animals with phenotypes was also calculated.

## Results

From the original dataset, 4% of visits were unidentified and therefore deleted. The descriptive statistics for the traits, presented in Table 2, indicate that there was little variation in the mean values for feeding traits. After exclusions of potential errors, the number of animals with phenotypic records were 789, 772, and 793 for the DS-CSY, DS-NADJ, and DS-ITO datasets, respectively. For the DS-CSY and DS-NADJ methods, 5% of all visits had at least one error, and 19% of DFI had the occurrence of at least one of those errors. For DS-ITO, 0.5% of the total visits and 0.3% of DFI were identified as errors and deleted from further analyses.

As shown in Table 3, the mean heritability estimate for FCR showed similar values among the studied datasets, 0.25 (0.10) for DS-CSY, 0.26 (0.10) for DS-NADJ, and 0.25 (0.10) for DS-

ITO. For ADFI the heritability values ranged from 0.31 (0.10) to 0.39 (0.11), with DS-CSY presenting the highest value and DS-NADJ the lowest, and DS-ITO an intermediate value of  $0.34 \pm 0.10$ . The same pattern was observed for the heritability estimates of RFI, with DS-NADJ presenting the lowest estimate estimate ( $0.26 \pm 0.10$ ), DS-CSY the highest ( $0.36 \pm 0.11$ ), and DS-ITO a value between those ( $0.34 \pm 0.09$ ). Very strong genetic correlations were found among all the studied traits (0.92 to 0.99) across the datasets used. The Phenotypic correlations were higher between FCR and RFI (0.75 to 0.79) than ADFI and RFI (0.72 to 0.73) and ADFI and FCR (0.53 to 0.57), and little variation was found among the datasets.

The rank correlations of all animals' EBVs (100%) among datasets were high for all traits (above 0.94). The correlation for the top 10% ranked animals ranged from 0.76 to 0.83 and was higher between DS-CSY and DS-NADJ for RFI (0.79), and between DS-NADJ and DS-ITO for FCR (0.81) and for ADFI (0.83). The rank correlations decreased slightly when the proportion of selected animals decreased to 5% for all traits, ranging from 0.72 to 0.80 (Table 4). The percentage of individuals selected in common was high for the 10% percentile in all traits (76% to 89%), and in the 5% percentile the lowest values were found for RFI between DS-NADJ and DS-ITO (68%) and between DS-CSY and DS-ITO (71%). In Table 6, the results indicate that the accuracy of the EBVs was higher when using the DS-CSY approach for all traits and lower for DS-NADJ. In general, the trait with the highest values of EBV accuracy was ADFI, and the lowest RFI.

## **Discussion**

The percentage of visits containing errors for the error identification method proposed by DS-CSY and DS-NADJ was lower than the 5.6% of visits reported by Casey & Dekkers (2002), but the percentage of DFI records containing at least one error was higher than the 17% reported in that same study. In a study with three datasets, Casey et al. (2005) found a mean of 9.6% of

individual visits containing errors, and 29.3% of DFI records, both results are higher than those reported in the present study. These results indicate that the data used in this study were not abnormally affected by errors and, therefore, the methodologies for correction should follow the expected pattern. For the method used in DS-ITO, Ito et al (2018) tested proportions of randomly deleted DFI values from 5% to 50%. The lower proportion of deleted values, which had a strong correlation to the true measure data, is still higher than the proportion found in this current study, implying that the model used was effective.

In a study with Duroc pigs tested in similar conditions to the present study, the means of phenotypic values for ADFI and ADG were 2.15 kg and 0.9 kg respectively (Lu et al., 2017). In Duroc, Landrace and Large White pigs, Chang et al. (2017), reported mean ADG of 1.1 kg and a mean FCR of 2.1 for the three breeds. These results are close to the values observed in the present study.

The heritability estimates in the current study are of moderate magnitude. The lowest heritabilities for ADFI and RFI were when using the dataset with no adjustments (DS-NADJ), and the highest heritability estimates obtained based on the DS-CSY dataset, indicating that the increase in the complexity of the correction method positively affected the heritability estimates for these traits. For FCR, Gilbert et al. (2007) in a study with growing Large White pigs estimated a heritability of  $0.31 \pm 0.05$ , higher than the estimated for all three datasets in the present study. However, for ADFI and RFI, the estimates were  $0.23 \pm 0.04$  and  $0.14 \pm 0.03$ , respectively. Jiao et al. (2014), studying Duroc boars reported heritabilities of  $0.32 \pm 0.09$  for FCR,  $0.66 \pm 0.11$  for ADFI and  $0.10 \pm 0.05$  for RFI, which are higher than the presented in this study for FCR and ADFI and lower for RFI. In a study based on Bayesian inference, Shirali et al. (2018) reported heritability estimates for ADFI higher than those estimated for DF-NADJ and of RFI lower than all the datasets, of  $0.32 \pm 0.04$  and  $0.15 \pm 0.03$ , respectively.

Genetic correlation between traits were close to unity, which indicates that selection for one of them would result in high indirect response in the others. Selection for lower RFI (higher feed efficiency) would result in animals with lower FCR (better feed conversion) and ADFI. In the same way, animals with higher EBVs for ADFI would result in a worst FCR and higher RFI. Hoque et al. (2007) studying feed efficiency traits in Duroc pigs, also found strong genetic correlations between FCR and RFI ( $0.83 \pm 0.02$ ). However, this correlation is lower than the estimates presented in the current study. Jiao et al. (2014) also reported lower genetic correlations (although with high standard errors) between the traits such as  $0.07 \pm 0.09$  between RFI and ADFI, and  $0.53 \pm 0.31$  between RFI and FCR. Cai et al. (2008) reported negative genetic correlations between FE (FE = ADG/ADFI) and RFI ( $-0.74 \pm 0.13$ ) and FE and ADFI ( $-0.26 \pm 0.21$ ) and positive genetic correlations between ADFI and RFI ( $0.52 \pm 0.12$ ). These results corroborate that selection for better FE or FCR would result in lower ADFI and RFI, which may be problematic especially for lactating sows, as the reduction in ADFI might accentuate the difficulty of these animals in meeting the high demand for nutrients (Eissen et al., 2000).

The rank correlations between EBVs predicted for the traits in different datasets shows that there was change in the classification of the animals as the proportion of selected animals decreased. The greater influence in the percentage of selected individual and the difference between ranks in the DS-ITO may be due to this error exclusion method being more flexible, allowing values otherwise considered as outliers to remain in the dataset. However, the correction method had only a small effect in the selection of the best animals in the studied population. Overall, DS-CSY had higher EBV accuracy and this result could be attributed to the more elaborate error identification and correction of the data.

## **Conclusions**

In this study demonstrated that the more elaborated method for editing and correction of DFI data from electronic feeders (DS-CSY) resulted in higher heritability and EBV accuracy of the derived traits. In general, the selection of animals was not greatly affected by the editing and correction method, except for RFI when using DS-ITO. The high correlation of ADFI with FCR and RFI indicates that selection for feed efficiency will result in indirect selection for reduced ADFI. Based on the results obtained, the recommended correction method for the data would be the one with exclusion of the 16 error types and adjustment of the error free DFI data through a linear mixed model.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **Acknowledgment**

This study was partially funded in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brazil (CAPES) – Finance Code 001.

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## Tables

Table 1 – Criteria used for identifying errors in feed intake data from electronic swine feeders.

Error type	Variable <sup>1</sup>	Visits involved	Criteria
1 FIV-lo	Feed intake per visit (FIV)	All	FIV < -20 g
2 FIV-hi		All	FIV > 2.000 g
3 FIV-0 s		Occupation time per visit = 0	FIV > 20 g
4 OTV-b	Occupation time per visit (OTV)	All	OTV < 0 s
5 OTV-a		All	OTV > 3,600 s
6 FRV-hi-FIV-lo	Feeding rate per visit (FRV)	0 < FIV < 50 g	FRV > 500 g/min
7 FRV-hi-strict		FIV ≥ 50 g preceding or following visit with FIV < -20 g	FRV > 110 g/min
8 FRV-ji		FIV ≥ 50 g nnot preceding or following a visit with FIV < -20 g	FRV > 170 g/min
9 FRV-0 g/min		FRV = 0 g/min	OTV > 500 s
10 FRV-lo		FRV ≠ 0 g/min	FRV ≤ 2 g/min
11 LWD-lo	Leading weight difference (LWD)	All except last visit of each feeder in test period	LWD < -20 g
12 LWD-hi		All except last visit of each feeder in test period	LWD > 1.800 g
13 FWD-lo	Following weight difference	All except last visit of each feeder in test period	FWD < -20 g
14 FWD-hi		All except last visit of each feeder in test period	FWD > 1.800 g
15 LTD-hi	Leading time difference (LTD)	All except last visit of each feeder in test period	LTD < 0 s
16 DPT-hi	Following time difference (FTD)	All except last visit of each feeder in test period	DPT < 0 s

<sup>1</sup>FIV = feed intake per visit (entrance weight - exit weight), OTV = occupation time per visit (exit time - entrance time), FRV = feeding rate per visit (FIV/(C)TV/60)), LWD = leading weight difference (entrance weight of following visit - exit weight of present visit), FWD = following weight difference (entrance weight of present visit - exit weight of preceding visit), LTD = leading time difference (entrance time of following visit - exit time of present visit), and FTD = following time difference (entrance time of present visit - exit time of preceding visit).

**Table 2** – Descriptive statistic of the datasets used in the analyses of feed efficiency traits.

Traits <sup>1</sup>	n	Mean	sd
Entry age (days)	793	69.3	6.28
Mean test period (days)	793	78.14	7.64
On-test weight (kg)	793	24.96	3.19
Off-test weight (kg)	793	99.84	6.32
ADG	793	0.96	0.12
TG	793	74.88	6.16
ADFI1	789	2.01	0.23
ADFI2	772	1.97	0.27
ADFI3	793	2.03	0.28
FCR1	789	2.10	0.29
FCR2	772	2.07	0.30
FCR3	793	2.12	0.32
TFI1	789	157.24	22.88
TFI2	772	154.54	24.87
TFI3	793	158.28	26.01

<sup>1</sup>ADG: average daily gain; TG: total weight gain; ADFI1: average daily feed intake for the dataset corrected by Casey's method; ADFI2: average daily feed intake for the dataset with no adjustment; ADFI3: average daily feed intake for the dataset corrected by ITO's method; FCR1: feed conversion ratio for the dataset corrected by Casey's method; FCR2: feed conversion ratio for the dataset with no adjustment; FCR3: feed conversion ratio for the dataset corrected by ITO's method; TFI1: total feed intake for dataset corrected by Casey's method; TFI2: total feed intake for dataset with no adjustment; TFI3: total feed intake the dataset corrected by ITO's method.

**Table 3** Heritability (diagonal)  $\pm$  standard errors, genetic correlations (bellow diagonal) and phenotypic correlation (above diagonal) of the studied traits using three different datasets in Large White pigs.

DS-CSY			
Trait <sup>1</sup>	FCR	ADFI	RFI
FCR	<b>0.25 <math>\pm</math> (0.10)</b>	0.53 $\pm$ (0.03)	0.76 $\pm$ (0.01)
ADFI	0.95 $\pm$ (0.22)	<b>0.39 <math>\pm</math> (0.11)</b>	0.73 $\pm$ (0.02)
RFI	0.99 $\pm$ (0.02)	0.96 $\pm$ (0.09)	<b>0.36 <math>\pm</math> (0.11)</b>

DS-NADJ			
	FCR	ADFI	RFI
FCR	<b>0.26 <math>\pm</math> (0.10)</b>	0.56 $\pm$ (0.03)	0.79 $\pm$ (0.01)
ADFI	0.92 $\pm$ (0.26)	<b>0.31 <math>\pm</math> (0.10)</b>	0.72 $\pm$ (0.02)
RFI	0.99 $\pm$ (0.03)	0.95 $\pm$ (0.19)	<b>0.26 <math>\pm</math> (0.08)</b>

DS-ITO			
	FCR	ADFI	RFI
FCR	<b>0.25 <math>\pm</math> (0.10)</b>	0.57 $\pm$ (0.03)	0.75 $\pm$ (0.02)
ADFI	0.95 $\pm$ (0.25)	<b>0.34 <math>\pm</math> (0.10)</b>	0.73 $\pm$ (0.02)
RFI	0.99 $\pm$ (0.01)	0.98 $\pm$ (0.10)	<b>0.34 <math>\pm</math> (0.09)</b>

<sup>1</sup>ADFI: average daily feed intake; FCR: feed conversion ratio; RFI: residual feed intake; DS-CSY: dataset corrected by Casey's method; DS-NADJ: dataset with no adjustment; DS-ITO: dataset corrected by ITO's method;

**Table 4** Spearman correlations between animals' genetic breeding values (BV) predicted for feed efficiency traits<sup>1</sup> using three different datasets<sup>2</sup> with different proportions of selected individuals.

FCR			
	DS-CSY and DS-NADJ	DS-CSY and DS-ITO	DS-NADJ and DS-ITO
100%	0.96	0.94	0.96
10%	0.77	0.76	0.81
5%	0.73	0.74	0.80
ADFI			
	DS-CSY and DS-NADJ	DS-CSY and DS-ITO	DS-NADJ and DS-ITO
100%	0.97	0.95	0.97
10%	0.82	0.79	0.83
5%	0.76	0.72	0.74
RFI			
	DS-CSY and DS-NADJ	DS-CSY and DS-ITO	DS-NADJ and DS-ITO
100%	0.95	0.94	0.95
10%	0.79	0.77	0.76
5%	0.76	0.73	0.75

<sup>1</sup>ADFI: average daily feed intake; FCR: feed conversion ratio; RFI: residual feed intake; <sup>2</sup>DS-CSY: dataset corrected by Casey's method; DS-NADJ: dataset with no adjustment; DS-ITO: dataset corrected by ITO's method;

**Table 5** - Percentage of selected individuals in common considering the percentiles 10% and 5% between genetic breeding values (BV) predicted for feed efficiency traits<sup>1</sup> using three different datasets<sup>2</sup>.

FCR			
	DS-CSY and DS-NADJ	DS-CSY and DS-ITO	DS-NADJ and DS-ITO
10%	0.81	0.82	0.77
5%	0.84	0.76	0.76
ADFI			
	DS-CSY and DS-NADJ	DS-CSY and DS-ITO	DS-NADJ and DS-ITO
10%	0.89	0.86	0.84
5%	0.84	0.74	0.81
RFI			
	DS-CSY and DS-NADJ	DS-CSY and DS-ITO	DS-NADJ and DS-ITO
10%	0.84	0.80	0.76
5%	0.86	0.71	0.68

<sup>1</sup>ADFI: average daily feed intake; FCR: feed conversion ratio; RFI: residual feed intake; <sup>2</sup>DS-CSY: dataset corrected by Casey's method; DS-NADJ: dataset with no adjustment; DS-ITO: dataset corrected by ITO's method;

**Table 6** - Estimates of means and standard deviation (s.d.) of breeding values' accuracies for animals with measured phenotype.

	Trait <sup>1</sup>	Accuracy	
		mean	sd
DS-CSY	FCR	0.39	0.05
	ADFI	0.41	0.05
	RFI	0.36	0.04
DS-NADJ	FCR	0.34	0.02
	ADFI	0.35	0.02
	RFI	0.32	0.02
DS-ITO	FCR	0.36	0.02
	ADFI	0.37	0.02
	RFI	0.35	0.02

<sup>1</sup>ADFI: average daily feed intake; FCR: feed conversion ratio; RFI: residual feed intake; DS-CSY: dataset corrected by Casey's method; DS-NADJ: dataset with no adjustment; DS-ITO: dataset corrected by ITO's method.

**CAPÍTULO IV – RANDOM REGRESSION TO GENETICALLY MODEL THE  
LONGITUDINAL DATA OF FEED INTAKE IN GROWING PIGS WITH WEEKLY AND  
BI-WEEKLY MEASUREMENTS<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Short communication nas normas da revista Livestock Science.

## **5. Random regression to genetically model the longitudinal data of feed intake in growing pigs with weekly and bi-weekly measurements.**

### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to investigate the variation of the genetic parameters of feed intake over the weeks of test and to determine if changing the recording of measurements from weekly to bi-weekly affects the variance of the trait and the genetic selection of the animals. The dataset contained 366,504 records of individual visits to an electronic feeder of 922 Landrace boars tested in a nucleus herd of a breeding company between the years of 2016 and 2021. Mean weekly feed intake from each pig was measured from a mean body weight (BW) of 35 kg at the start of the test and of 120.0 kg at the end. Random regression analyses were performed to fit the average daily feed intake (ADFI) into the days in test (DIT) considered. The (co)variance components were estimated via average information restricted maximum likelihood, considering the best model identified. A comparison was performed considering a full dataset and the dataset with the DFI recorded bi-weekly. The DFI heritabilities were moderate to high, ranging from  $0.61 \pm 0.09$  (DIT 3.5) to  $0.99 \pm 0.003$  (DIT 101.5). Adjacent DFI measure were strongly genetically correlated, with coefficients ranging from  $0.78 \pm 0.03$  to  $0.99 \pm 0.0001$ . The correlation estimates were near zero between distant DIT. The Spearman correlations between EBV obtained in the genetic evaluations performed in the full and censored data sets, were strong until 12 weeks (above 0.80) and, from there, showed a decline. On the other hand, when considering the top 10% animals for 3.5 days in test, the correlations ranged from 0.80 to 0.91 until 80.5 days in test, and from 0.40 to 0.50 after 80.5 days in test. Using bi-weekly measures of DFI does not affect the genetic parameter estimates using random regression models. The genetic selection of animals was similar for both datasets until the 80.5 DIT.

Key words: correction methods, feed efficiency, genetic parameter, pig, rank correlation.



## **Introduction**

Feed intake is one of the most important traits to be measured because it directly affects the body weight and carcass composition of animals. Traditionally, breeding programs account for feed intake as a single value of average daily feed intake. Through testing stations with electronic feeders it is possible to measure individual daily feed intake for group penned pigs (SCHULZE et al., 2002). The use of longitudinal feed intake data through random regression models allows the fitting of random genetic and environmental effects over time, increases statistical power, enables the visualization of variation in the parameters of the studied trait over time, increases the accuracies of EBVs and can facilitate the reduction in test costs with periodic recording (BERMEJO et al., 2003). The use of alternating groups in the electronic feeders allows the testing of twice as many animals than the continuous testing in the same period, with the recording of bi-weekly measures for each group (GRIGNOLA et al., 2002). It is established that deleting up to 70% of daily feed intakes of an animal does not drastically reduce the accuracy of data if first degree polynomial equations are used in the correction of missing values (EISSEN; DE HAAN; KANIS, 1999). However, the bi-weekly measurement of DFI could negatively affect the genetic improvement of animals for feed efficiency if the selection of animals is changed when compared to the use of data from continuous testing. The aim of this study was to investigate the variation of the genetic parameters of feed intake over the weeks of test in the electronic feeders and to determine if changing the recording of measurements from continuous to bi-weekly affects the variance of the trait and the genetic selection of the animals.

## **Material and methods**

### **Data**

Data was obtained from boarstested in a nucleus herd of a breeding company located in the United States. Before editing, the dataset contained 366,504 records of individual visits to the feeder of boars of the Landrace breed. From this dataset, data from 922 purebred Landrace boars, tested between the years of 2016 and 2021 were used. Daily feed intake from each pig was measured from a mean body weight of 35 kg at the start of the test and of 120.0 kg at the end. Individual feed intake data were collected through Feed Intake Recording Equipment (FIRE; Osborne Industries Inc., Osborne, KS, USA) distributed along 56 pens, allocating 12 animals each. The average test period was 13 weeks. The FIRE stations allowed access to feed 24h a day, limiting the entry of one animal at a time per feeder.

Data of feed intake generated by the software of the FIRE stations were edited by following the 16 criteria developed by Casey et al. (2005), and single visits containing errors were excluded. Animals with less than 50 days of total test period and pens with less than three animals were excluded.

For data correction the method of Casey et al. (2003) was used, where estimates of coefficients for percentage of the 16 errors, occupation time summed over visits containing specific errors and feed intake summed over visits containing specific errors, were calculated through a linear mixed model. After this step, error-free daily feed intake was adjusted for each pig and day for feed consumed in error visits by adding estimates of covariates.

All analyses were performed using the R software(R Core Team 2022).Average daily feed intake for each week of testing (ADFIW) was calculated as the mean daily feed intake (DFI) for each seven days period of testing.

### Fitting and comparison of models

Random regression analyses were performed to fit the ADFIW into the mean day in test (DIT) of each week considered, including 15 weeks, and the general computation was realized with the BLUPF90 software (MISZTAL et al., 2015). To ensure the best fit to the data, several different models were tested. These models vary according to the systematic effects included and the degree of the Legendre polynomials used to fit the additive genetic, permanent environment and fixed effects (Table 1). Entry age entry weight were tested as covariates, and were defined by the age or weight of the animal in the first day in test. Entry weight class and entry age class were tested as fixed effects. For entry weight class the weight in the first day of test was divided in six classes with a range of seven kg per class. For entry day class the first day of test was divided in 5 classes with a range of 10 days per class. The general models tested can be described as:

$$y_{ij} = F + \sum_{m=1}^4 \beta_m \phi_m(t_i) + \sum_{m=1}^k \alpha_{jm} \phi_m(t_{ij}) + \sum_{m=1}^k \rho_{jm} \phi_m(t_{ij}) + E_{ij}$$

where:  $y_{ij}$  is the daily feed intake at  $i^{th}$  day in test, belongs to  $j^{th}$  animal;  $F$  is the set of systematic effects;  $\beta_m$  are the regression coefficients to model the mean curve of the population;  $\phi_m(t_i)$  is the orthogonal Legendre polynomial which describe the mean curve of the population according to animal age ( $t_i$ );  $\phi_m(t_{ij})$  are the regression functions which describe the curves of each individual  $j$  according to day in test ( $t_{ij}$ ), for direct additive genetic and animal permanent environment effects, respectively;  $\alpha_{jm}$  and  $\rho_{jm}$ , are the regression coefficients for direct additive genetic and animal permanent environmental effects, respectively;  $k$  represent the number of regression coefficients of the Legendre polynomials used for the above described effects; and  $E_{ij}$  is the random residual effect associated to the observations. The residual variance was considered homogeneous.

The random regression models were compared using the following criteria: Akaike information criterion (AIC) (SCHWARZ, 1978), as proposed by Burnham & Anderson (2004); and Bayesian information criterion – BIC (SCHWARZ, 1978). Models that present lower values for AIC and BIC are preferred because they are expected to have a better quality of fit and a lower degree of complexity.

### **Estimation of genetic parameters and EBVs**

The (co)variance components were estimated via average information restricted maximum likelihood, considering the best model identified, using the AIREMLF90 software (MISZTAL et al., 2015). The computations of genetic parameters were performed using the R software (R, 2016), following the equations explained in Jamrozik and Schaeffer (1997). The EBVs and respective accuracies were obtained using the BLUPF90 software (MISZTAL et al., 2015), considering the (co)variance components previously estimated.

### **Data comparison**

A comparison was performed considering a full dataset and the dataset with the ADFIW recorded bi-weekly. For the EBVs obtained applying the best model to the two datasets – full and censored – spearman correlations were obtained between the 15 DIT evaluated for all animals with phenotype records and for the 10%, 5% and 1% best animals in the first week.

### **Results**

The best model to fit the data by the BIC and AIC was the one with Legendre polynomials, of 5<sup>th</sup> order for additive variance, 2 for permanent environment and 4 for the fixed regression, and a covariate of entry age. For all the studied models the lowest AIC and BIC values were obtained with Legendre polynomials of 5<sup>th</sup> order for additive variance and 2<sup>nd</sup> order for permanent environment effects

The DFI of the animals increased until the 73.5 days in test. From that, DFI decreased as well as the number of observations (Figure 1).

Additive variance estimates throughout DIT ranged from 0.035 kg<sup>2</sup> to 7.223 kg<sup>2</sup>, being stable around 0.0592 kg<sup>2</sup> until 80 DIT, after this point, the parameter estimates showed an inflation (Figure 2). Compared with the additive variances, the permanent environment variances were much more stable throughout DIT, ranging from 0.014 kg<sup>2</sup> to 0.086 kg<sup>2</sup>. The estimate of residual variance (homogeneous) was 0.006±0.0001.

The DFI heritabilities were moderate to high, ranging from 0.61±0.09 (DIT 3.5) to 0.99±0.003 (DIT 101.5). Apart de final inflation, the values tended to be stable around 0.68 until DIT 80.5 for both datasets (Figure 3). On the other hand, the contribution of the permanent environment effect on the phenotypic variance were moderated until DIT 80.5, showing a decrease in the final DIT in both datasets (Figure 4).

Adjacent DFI measures were strongly genetically correlated, with coefficients ranging from 0.78±0.03 to 0.99±0.0001. However, as the distance between records increases, the correlation estimates decreases, being near zero between some DIT (Figure 5). Almost similar behavior was assumed by the permanent environment effect, for which the correlations were strong between adjacent records and weaker between distant ones. However, the coefficients were always higher than 0.80 (Figure 6).

The Spearman correlations between EBV obtained in the genetic evaluations performed in the full and censored data sets, considering all animals with records, were strong until 12 weeks (above 0.80) and, from there, show a decline (ranging from 0.57 to 0.68). On the other hand, when considering the top 10% animals for 3.5 days in test, obtaining 92 animals and 87% of coincidence in the selection, the correlations were slightly weaker, ranging from 0.80 to 0.91 until 80.5 days in test, and from 0.40 to 0.50 after 80.5 days in test. For higher selection intensities, corresponding to

the top 5% and 1%, the correlations obtained achieve moderated to low magnitudes (Table 2). However, the coincidence in the selection was never lower than 70% of the animals.

### **Discussion**

The significant decrease in the number of animals for the final weeks might indicate that DFI data from this period is not accurate and does not reflect the trait in the population. The decrease of DFI in the final days may be due to the animals finishing the test and not completing a whole day of test.

The heritability estimates reported in this study for all the weeks of the test period were higher than the reported by Shirali et al. (2017) in a joint analysis of longitudinal and single recorded traits of Landrace boars, where the estimates ranged from 0,13 to 0,22. In a study with random regression using Legendre Polynomials, Cai et al (2011) found estimates varying from 0,11 to 0,33 in daily feed intake recorded from 105 to 195 days of life of Yorkshire boars.

Even though the use of bi-weekly measurements appears to not greatly affect selection in this simulated data, Schulze et al. (2001), using real data from continuous and periodic feeding groups, showed that the alternation of animals from electronic feeders to conventional feeders affects the feed intake and the feeding behavior, making data obtained in the periodic feeding group not reliable. This result indicate the need for adaptation in the environment of the animals when they are in the week off, being necessary that the food is offered in the same manner as in the electronic feeder.

### **Conclusions**

Using bi-weekly measures of DFI does not affect the genetic parameters estimates using random regression models. The genetic selection of animals was similar for both datasets until the

80.5 DIT. The reduction in the number of animals tested in the final weeks greatly reduced the quality of data.

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Table 1 – Effects included in the statistical model for the Landrace boars

<b>Legendre polinomials</b>	<b>AIC</b>	<b>BIC</b>	<b>AIC rank</b>	<b>BIC rank</b>
<i>Model with fixed effect of entry weight class</i>				
$\sigma a_5$ pe2 fixreg4	-16713.759	-16578.600	1	1
$\sigma a_5$ pe2 fixreg5	-16707.652	-16572.500	3	2
$\sigma a_5$ pe3 fixreg4	-16713.500	-16577.501	2	3
<i>Model with covariate of entry weight and fixed effect of entry age class</i>				
$\sigma a_5$ pe2 fixreg1	-16613.760	-16478.656	5	4
$\sigma a_5$ pe3 fixreg1	-16614.185	-16459.770	4	5
$\sigma a_5$ pe4 fixreg1	-16606.211	-16427.669	6	6
<i>Model with fixed effect of entry weight class</i>				
$\sigma a_5$ pe2 fixreg1	-16367.028	-16231.900	8	7
$\sigma a_5$ pe3 fixreg1	-16368.114	-16213.700	7	9
$\sigma a_5$ pe4 fixreg1	-16361.271	-16182.700	11	11
<i>Model with covariate of entry age and fixed effect of entry weight class</i>				
$\sigma a_5$ pe2 fixreg1	-16362.63	-16227.517	10	8
$\sigma a_5$ pe3 fixreg1	-16362.779	-16208.364	9	10
$\sigma a_5$ pe4 fixreg1	-16356.989	-16178.447	12	13
<i>Model with fixed effect of nested entry weight class and entry age class</i>				
$\sigma a_5$ pe2 fixreg1	-16314.75	-16179.637	14	12
$\sigma a_5$ pe3 fixreg1	-16356.989	-16162.749	13	14
$\sigma a_5$ pe4 fixreg1	-16317.164	-16130.916	15	16
<i>Model with fixed effect of entry age class</i>				
$\sigma a_5$ pe2 fixreg1	-16274.207	-16139.094	17	15
$\sigma a_5$ pe3 fixreg1	-16274.541	-16120.126	16	17
$\sigma a_5$ pe4 fixreg1	-16268.339	-16089.797	18	18

Effect of additive variance ( $\sigma a$ ), permanent environment (pe) and fixed regression (fixreg). The numbers indicate the order of the Legendre polinomials for each effect.

Table 2 – Number of coincident selected animals and Spearman correlations ( $\rho$ ) between the EBV predicted throughout days in test considering all and top 10%, 5%, and 1% Landrace pigs for the 3.5 days in test.

Items	Percentage of selected animals			
	100% <sup>a</sup>	10% <sup>a</sup>	5% <sup>a</sup>	1% <sup>a</sup>
n <sup>b</sup>	921	92	46	9
%C <sup>c</sup>	100%	86.96%	80.43%	77.78%
DIT <sup>d</sup>	Spearman correlations ( $\rho$ )			
3.5	0.972	0.795	0.648	0.367
10.5	0.970	0.804	0.597	0.367
17.5	0.973	0.829	0.658	0.433
24.5	0.974	0.840	0.751	0.433
31.5	0.976	0.849	0.798	0.500
38.5	0.977	0.851	0.818	0.650
45.5	0.973	0.847	0.813	0.700
52.5	0.970	0.842	0.772	0.650
59.5	0.967	0.843	0.790	0.467
66.5	0.964	0.883	0.814	0.433
73.5	0.966	0.914	0.889	0.767
80.5	0.880	0.782	0.747	0.733
87.5	0.681	0.500	0.464	0.533
94.5	0.593	0.397	0.403	0.467
101.5	0.574	0.481	0.566	0.517

<sup>a</sup>Percentage of best animals considering 3.5 days in test; <sup>b</sup>Number of animals; <sup>c</sup>Percentage of coincident animals; <sup>d</sup>Days in test.

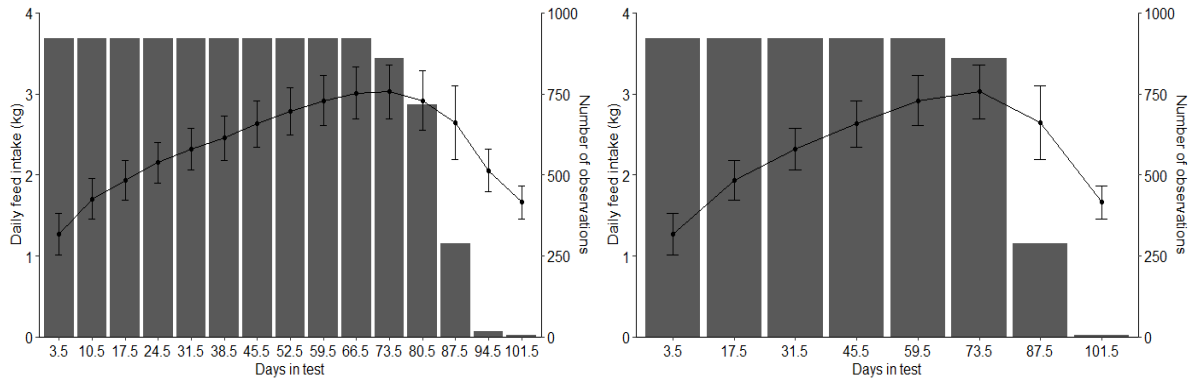


Figure 1 –Daily feed intake (kg) and number of observations according to the days in test for Landrace pigs in full (left) and censored (right) datasets.

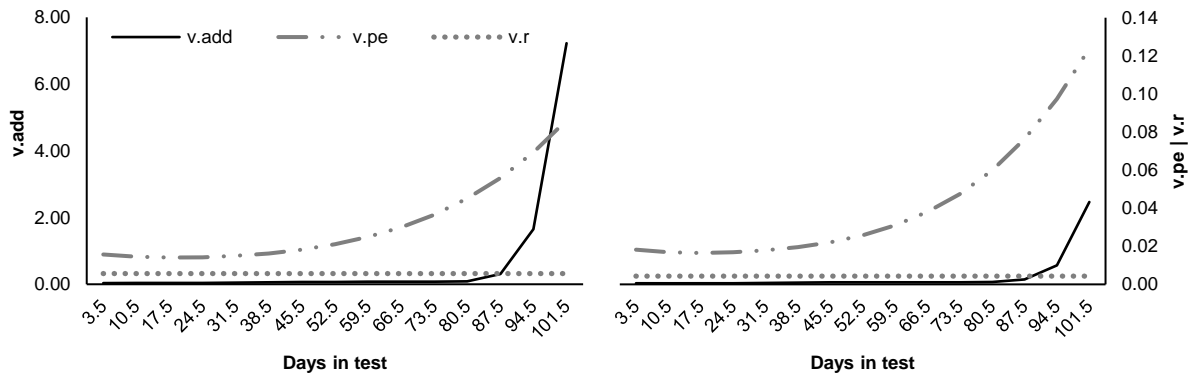


Figure 2—Additive genetic ( $v.add$ ), direct permanent environment ( $v.pe$ ) and residual ( $v.r$ ) variances estimated for the daily feed intake (kg) throughout days in test of Landrace pigs in full (left) and censored (right) datasets.

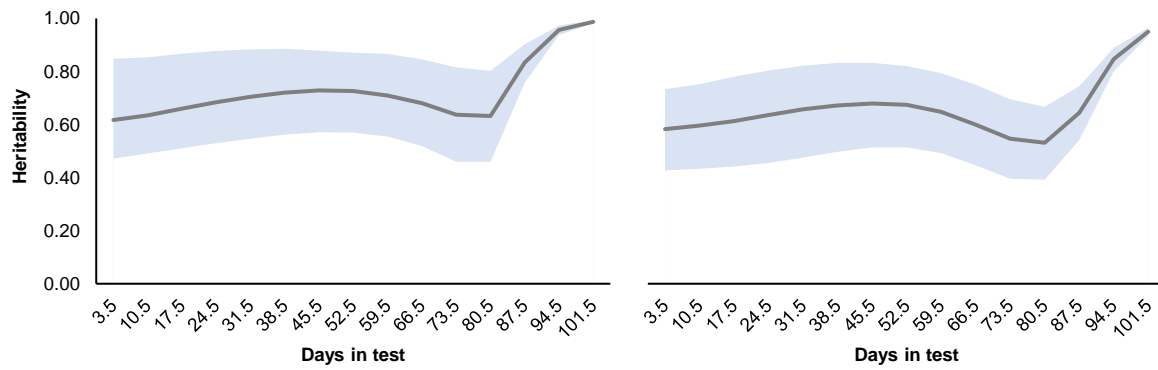


Figure 3 –Heritability estimates (line) and confidence interval 95% (shaded area) throughout days in test of Landrace pigs in full (left) and censored (right) datasets.

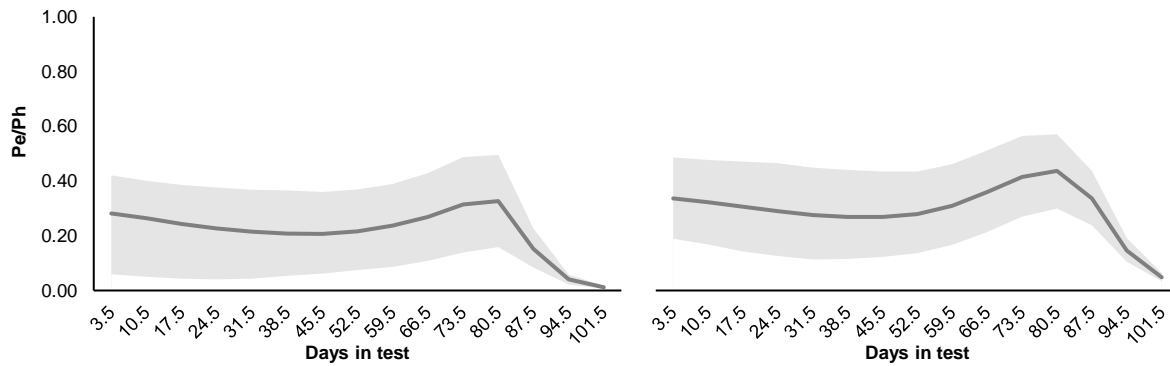


Figure 4 –Permanent environment and phenotypic variance ratio estimates (line) and confidence interval 95% (shaded area) throughout days in test of Landrace pigs in full (left) and censored (right) datasets.

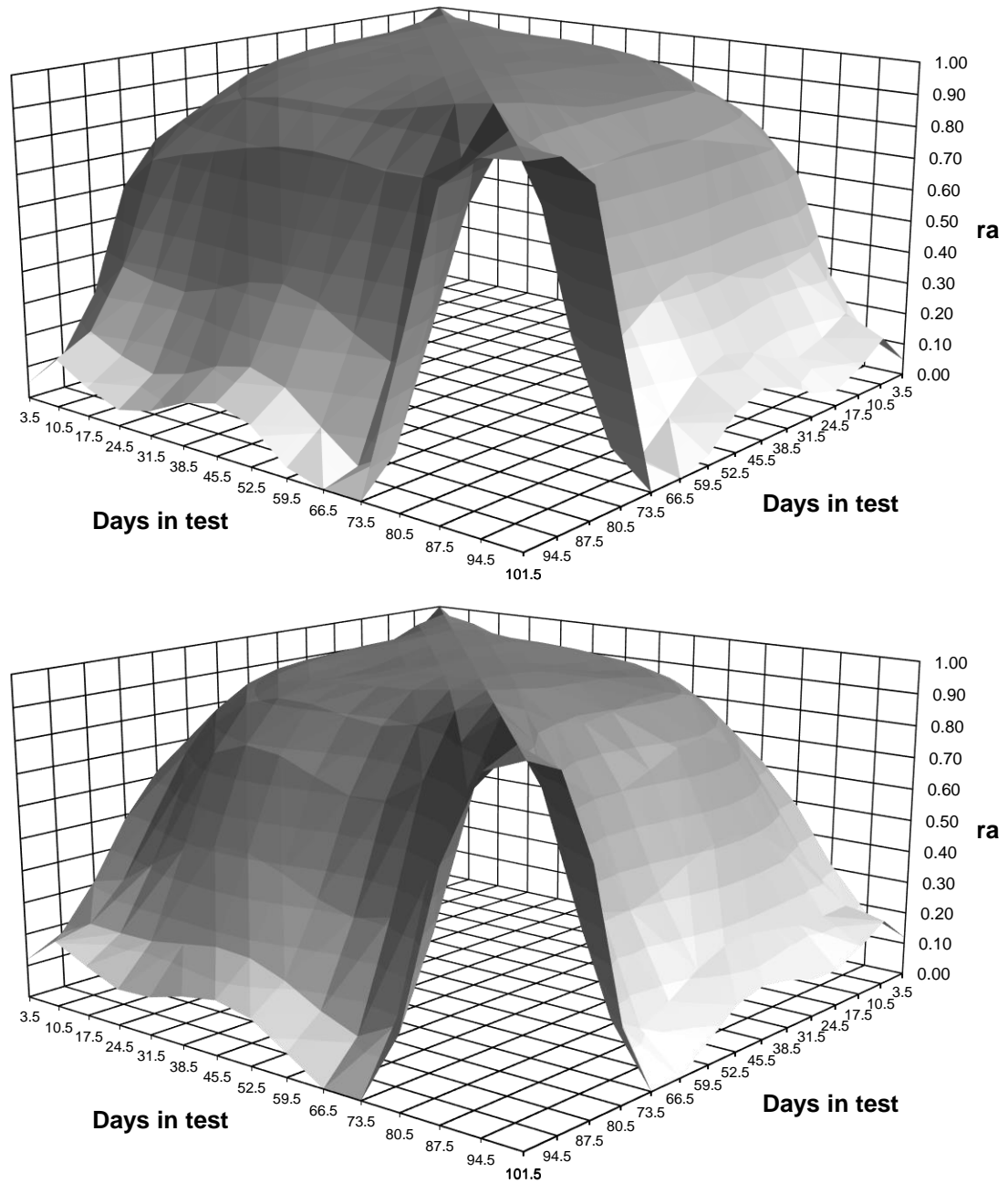


Figure 5 –Genetic correlation estimates between daily feed intake ( $r_a$ ) measured throughout days in test of Landrace pigs in full (up) and censored (down) datasets.

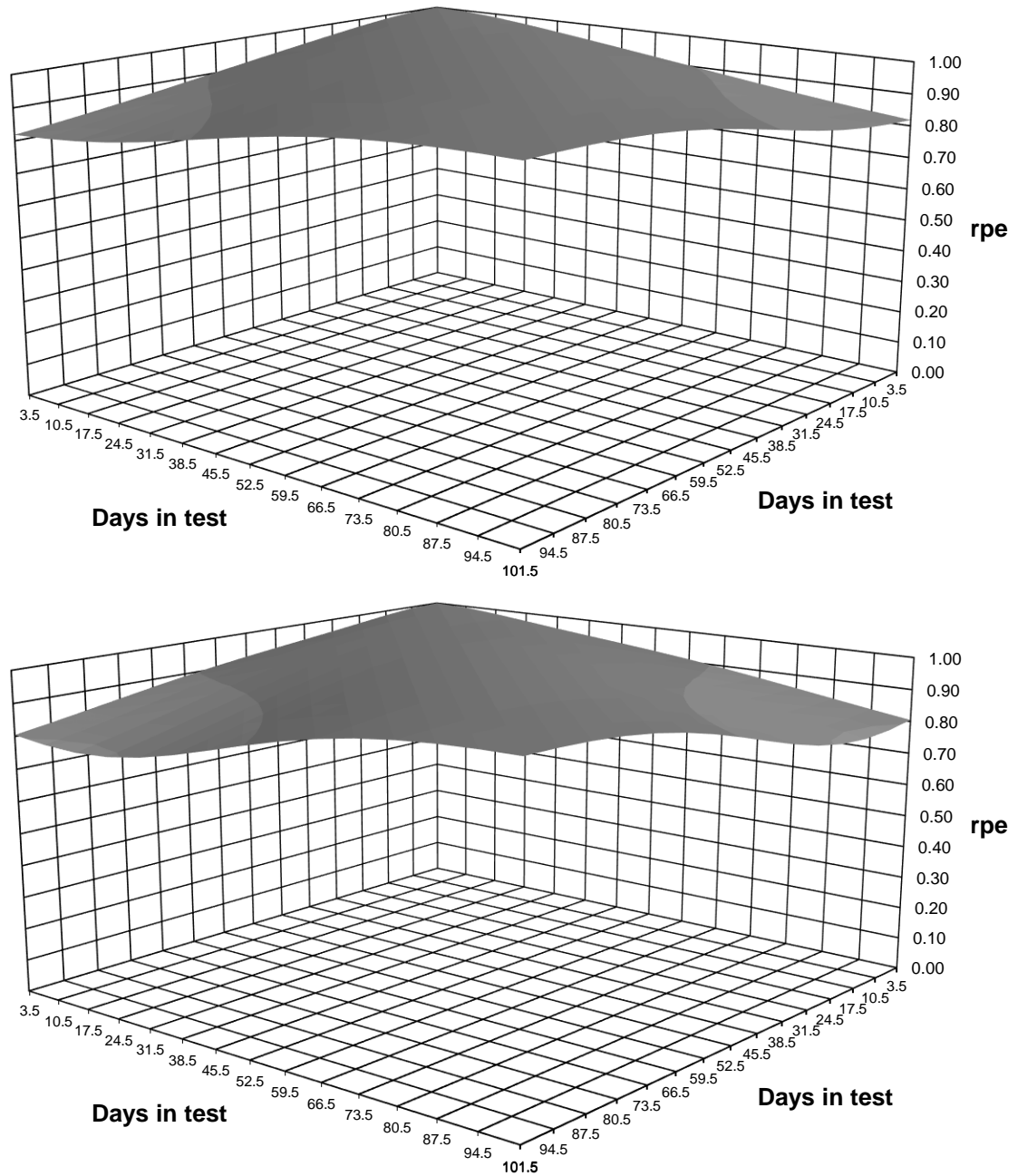


Figure 6 –Permanent environment correlation estimates between daily feed intake (rpe) measured throughout days in test of Landrace pigs in full (up) and censored (down) datasets.



## **CAPÍTULO V – CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS**

## 6. CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS

Baseado nos resultados obtidos, a inclusão do consumo alimentar, conversão alimentar, ou consumo residual no índice de seleção terá o mesmo efeito prático na seleção de animais mais eficientes. Desta forma, a opção por utilizar o consumo alimentar como preditor da eficiência pode ser mais simples e prática.

A escolha de um método adequado para a correção das medidas de consumo alimentar obtidas através de alimentadores eletrônicos é essencial ao aumento da acurácia de seleção dos animais. Contudo, os parâmetros genéticos e a seleção genética dos animais não são grandemente afetados pela escolha do método de correção, o que implica que, desde que se corrijam os dados com algum dos métodos, a seleção deve ocorrer de maneira eficiente.

É essencial às empresas de genética suína prezar pela qualidade dos dados obtidos nos comedouros eletrônicos tanto na sua coleta, com a boa manutenção dos equipamentos e controle diário para anormalidades durante os testes, quanto após o fim do período de teste, utilizando um método de edição e correção que diminua a influência dos erros na estimação dos valores genéticos.

A estratégia de alternar grupos para otimizar o uso dos alimentadores pode ser uma boa alternativa na redução de custos do teste de consumo dos núcleos de genética. Através do uso de modelos de regressão aleatória com dados simulados de medidas bissemanais demonstrou-se que é possível selecionar os animais de maneira acurada com a metade do período de teste. É necessário, porém, garantir que os animais não precisem se adaptar ao ambiente do alimentador a cada alternância de grupo, e que o comportamento alimentar não seja alterado no período em que os animais estão fora do teste.

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**VITA**

Lucas de Vargas nasceu em 08 de dezembro de 1993 no município de Portão, no estado do Rio Grande do Sul. É filho de Sérgio Luiz Costa de Vargas e Solange Terezinha Rodrigues de Vargas. No primeiro semestre de 2011 ingressou no curso de Zootecnia da Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel). Em dezembro de 2015 obteve o título de Bacharel em Zootecnia. No ano de 2016, iniciou o curso de mestrado no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Zootecnia da Faculdade de Agronomia Eliseu Maciel da UFPel, na área de Melhoramento Genético Animal, sob orientação do profa. Dra. Arione Augusti Boligon, obtendo em 2018 o título de Mestre em Melhoramento Genético Animal. No mesmo ano ingressou no curso de Doutorado em Zootecnia pela Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), na área de Melhoramento Genético Animal, sob orientação do prof. Dr. Jaime Araujo Cobuci. Nesse período foi desenvolvido um estudo genético quantitativo do consumo alimentar em suínos testados em comedouros eletrônicos. Por fim, submeteu-se a banca de defesa de tese em agosto de 2022 pela UFRGS em Porto Alegre, RS.