

MSc Research Assistantship
SWINE BEHAVIOUR AND WELFARE
University of Guelph and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Subject: Impact of early experience with humans on human-animal relationship in piglets

Project: This study is part of a research program on swine behaviour and welfare. Humans and their relationships with animals play a major role in farm animal welfare. Early experiences in animals can greatly affect their future relationship with humans. The study of the human-animal relationship in pigs mainly focussed on fattening or breeding animals but not on young piglets. Therefore, this project aims to determine the impact of early experience with humans on piglet's reactivity to humans.

The objective of the project is to study different aspects of the human-animal relationship in piglets: memory of past experiences, recognition of humans, and impact of the affective valence of the experience. The student will have to do a literature review of the existing knowledge on the subject in pigs and other farm species and then carry out the experimental protocol, collect and analyse behavioural data, and finally write scientific article(s) about the results.

The student will work with a research scientist (Nicolas Devillers, AAFC), a professor (Renée Bergeron, University of Guelph) and a technician in ethology. The research project will take place at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Dairy and Swine R&D Centre in Sherbrooke (Quebec), but will spend one semester in Guelph to complete the coursework. The position includes a guaranteed stipend of \$18,500 per year for two years.

Start date: May first 2012

Qualifications: Bachelor degree in animal science, animal biology or veterinary science
A strong motivation for the study of animal welfare and behaviour
Knowledge of animal sciences, especially animal behaviour
Basic knowledge of computer (Office) and statistics analysis
Good writing skills in English
Practical experience with pigs or farm animals would be an asset
Practical experience in ethology would be an asset
French speaking would be an asset, but is not a requirement

For information and to apply for this position, contact Renée BERGERON (Animal and Poultry Science) at rbergeron@alfredc.uoguelph.ca or Nicolas DEVILLERS at Nicolas.Devillers@agr.gc.ca