The association between measurements of antimicrobial use and resistance in the faeces microbiota of finisher batches

The objectives were to present three approaches for calculating antimicrobial (AM) use in pigs that take into account the rearing period and rearing site, and to study the association between these measurements and phenotypical resistance and abundance of resistance genes in faeces samples from 10 finisher batches. The AM use was calculated relative to the rearing period of the batches as (i) 'Finisher Unit Exposure' at unit level, (ii) 'Lifetime Exposure' at batch level and (iii) 'Herd Exposure' at herd level. A significant effect on the occurrence of tetracycline resistance measured by cultivation was identified for Lifetime Exposure for the AM class: tetracycline. Furthermore, for Lifetime Exposure for the AM classes: macrolide, broad-spectrum penicillin, sulfonamide and tetracycline use as well as Herd Unit Exposure for the AM classes: aminoglycoside, lincosamide and tetracycline use, a significant effect was observed on the occurrence of genes coding for the AM resistance classes: aminoglycoside, lincosamide, macrolide, β-lactam, sulfonamide and tetracycline. No effect was observed for Finisher Unit Exposure. Overall, the study shows that Lifetime Exposure is an efficient measurement of AM use in finisher batches, and has a significant effect on the occurrence of resistance, measured either by cultivation or metagenomics.