Morphological characterization of indigenous and crossbred pigs in rural and peri-urban areas of southwestern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

We sought to determine morphological descriptors of Nigerian indigenous pigs (NIP) and crossbred pigs (CBP) based on relationships among live weight (LW) and a suite of 18 morphometric measurements plus the number of teats. We sampled four locations in southwestern Nigeria and obtained data for a total of 120 NIP and CBP. More female pigs (61.7%) than males (38.3%) were sampled, and they had a mean live weight of 19.9 ± 6.10 kg (range 9 - 32 kg) and 20.1 ± 6.08 kg (range 8 - 37 kg), respectively. The NIP had a longer snout, wider head and longer erect ears than CBP (P < 0.0001). Morphological variables that were highly correlated with LW included neck circumference (NC), breast height (BH), rump height (RH), body length (BL), interorbital width (IW), paunch girth (PG), hearth girth (HG), tail length (TL) and length of snout (LS) with Spearman correlation coefficients (R2) of 0.97, 0.92, 0.96, 0.97, 0.91, 0.97, 0.97, 0.90, and 0.93, respectively (all P < 0.0001). Teat number for NIP ranged from 5 to 14 while the CBP had a range of 10 to 16 teats. For male NIP, HG and TL best-fit in the model for body weight prediction (LW = −25.71 + 0.43 HG + 2.21 TL; R2 = 0.93; P < 0.0001), while HG and IW had the best-fit for the female NIP (LW = −28.27 + 0.50 HG + 2.22 IW; R2 = 0.96; P < 0.0001). Models for male and female CBP were LW = −8.89 + 0.32 RH + 0.34 BL (R2 = 0.84; P < 0.0001) and LW = −13.01 + 0.44 RH+0.27 BL (R2 = 0.94; P < 0.0001), respectively. Thus, for these populations of pigs, LS and TN differentiated NIP from CBP, because the NIP consistently recorded longer LS and less TN.

Keywords: Nigerian Indigenous Pigs; Live Weight; Morphological Descriptors; Relationship

1. INTRODUCTION

Pigs are one of the most prolific and fast growing livestock that can convert food waste to valuable products. The value of a pig carcass for meat production depends primarily on carcass weight and on the relative proportions of fat and lean meat. As consumer preferences become more specific, the shape of retail cuts and, thus, carcass conformation plays an increasingly significant role in the pork industry [1]. Pigs have several advantages over other species of farm animals including high prolificacy involving the possibility of two or more litters per year. Hence, experimental lines can be produced faster than most other farm animals [2]. In many societies in the developing world, indigenous pigs are the favourite monogastric mammal rural families used to supplement protein intake and family income because of their less intensive management and feed requirements [3]. Pig production is relatively inexpensive due to fast growth rate, short generation interval and high production potential, prolific fecundity [4,5], highly efficient carcass yield and high adaptability to varied environmental conditions. The intake of protein in Nigeria stands at 3.5 g/caput/day [6] and this is far less than the 35 g caput/day recommended by the World Health Organization. Limited information exists on the relationship between body weight and linear measurements for Nigerian indigenous pigs (NIP) and their crossbred pigs (CBP) with exotic forms such as Large White. Such inferences are important in anthropogenic selection for frame size, drug administration, feeding, and marketing of live weight and carcasses, among other potential applications. For example, morphometric measurements characterize and establish breed standards in the production of West African Dwarf (WAD) goats in rural com-
munities [7]. Linear body measurements are closely related to live weights for pigs [8-10] and in other farm animals including goats and sheep [11], poultry [12], cattle [13], and rabbits [14]. Such zoometrical measurements of body parts can predict live weight at relatively lower costs with a high relative accuracy and consistency.

The objectives of this study are to determine relationships among body weight and linear measurements in NIP and their CBP particularly crosses between NIP and Large White, and to establish morphological descriptors for this composite pig population.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study Sites

The study was conducted in southwestern Nigeria. The region was located between 7° and 9°S and between 3° and about 6°W. The study sites were located at elevations ranging from 200 to 500 meters above sea level. The region enjoyed abundant and reliable rainfall from April through October.

One hundred twenty samples of pigs were collected from four different locations of more than 100 km apart. Forty one CBP were from Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Teaching and Research Farm (T & R Farm), Osun State; these pigs had a history of over 5 years crossbreeding between selected or introduced commercial exotic founder stocks that were contaminated with other breeds of pigs. The remaining three locations contained indigenous pigs. First, 30 NIP were from Ogbooro, Saki Oyo State; these pigs had a history of over many years. Second, 16 NIP were from the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IAR&T), Ibadan, Oyo State. They were kept on a research farm and had regular feeding and record-keeping for each animal. Third, 33 NIP and their CBP particularly crosses between NIP and the teat number (TN), that observed for the each animal sampled.

Each animal was gently restrained while taking the measurements. The body weights in kilogram were recorded with the aid of weighing scale while the linear body measurements in centimetre were recorded using a tape. Animal ages were estimated by stage of dental growth as described by [15] and pigs were assigned to one of three in age-groups: 4 - 12, 12 - 24, and 24 - 48 months.

Means and standard error for body weight and linear body measurements were calculated using the General Linear Model Procedure of SAS software. The simple Linear Correlation Procedure of SAS was used to establish the strength of linear relationship and association between the different linear body measurements together with the bodyweight. Linear and multiple regression analysis were carried out using the PROC REG procedures of [16], and the stepwise model selection option. Prediction equations that related to body weight and linear body measurements were chosen based on values of the adjusted $R^2$ and RSD, reporting the equation with the highest $R^2$ and the lowest RSD values.

We employed the following model:  
$Y_{ij} = a + b_i x_i + e_{ij}$  

Where:  
$Y_{ij}$ = the dependent variable body weight, $a$ = Intercept, $b_i$ = partial regression coefficient of the dependent variable, $x_i$ = ith independent variable, $e_{ij}$ = random error.
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study sampled more female pigs (61.7%) than males (38.3%) with a mean live weight of 19.9 ± 6.10 kg (range 9 - 32 kg) and 20.1 ± 6.08 kg (8 - 37 kg), respectively. This structure reflected the population of pigs generally kept by subsistence peasant farmers in rural areas. Generally, rural farmers were artistic breeders who naturally and traditionally knew that a constant flock size essentially depends on a large number of reproductively active females that must be kept for long periods of time.

The means of live body weight and other morphological measurements for all animals sampled were summarized in Table 1. The CBP sampled from Research Farm, OAU, had a mean live weight of 17.1 kg in the 4 - 24-month age group. NIP sampled from Igbara Odo had a mean live weight of 22.4 kg. Within the population sampled at IAR&T, the mean body weight was 18.1 kg. The mean live weight for samples from Ogbooro was 22.1 kg. The location of sampling did not have any effect on WH, RL, and RW (P < 0.05). The weight of the NIP ranged between 11 and 37 kg with the overall mean weight of 21.4 ± 6.40 kg; these animals were in 12 - 48-month age group.

Correlation coefficients among live weight and morphometric traits in NIP and CBP were shown in Table 2. Morphological variables that were highly correlated with body weight included NC, BH, RH, BL, IW, PG, HG, TL, and LS with correlation coefficients of 0.97, 0.92, 0.96, 0.97, 0.91, 0.97, 0.90, and 0.93, respectively (in all P < 0.0001). This indicated that, depending on genetic correlations, selection for these traits could have resulted in responses in the correlated traits.

The NIP had longer snout, wider head, and longer erect ears than the CBP (P < 0.0001) (Table 3). The TN recorded for the NIP had a mean of 11.5 ± 1.76 with a range of 5 - 14 indicating an odd number along the belly line. In comparison, the CBP had a range of from 10 to 16 teats, with a mean of 14.0 ± 1.46. The best prediction equation for NIP was (LW = −5.03 + 0.58 HG; R² = 0.89) while that of CBP was (LW = −5.95 + 0.51 BL; R² = 0.83) (Table 4). The multiple regression model for male

| VARIABLES | T&R FARM | OGBOORO | IAR&T | IGBARA ODO |
|-----------|----------|---------|-------|------------|
| LW        | 17.1b    | 22.4a   | 18.1b | 22.1a      |
| BL        | 45.0d    | 45.3b   | 39.5b | 43.7b      |
| WH        | 37.3c    | 46.0b   | 29.5a | 32.2a      |
| RH        | 40.9d    | 35.7b   | 31.8b | 34.2b      |
| SW        | 10.2c    | 11.2b   | 10.6a | 11.6a      |
| HW        | 9.2b     | 10.0b   | 10.2a | 10.7a      |
| RL        | 10.2d    | 10.9b   | 10.6a | 10.1a      |
| RW        | 8.6c     | 10.2b   | 9.8a  | 10.3a      |
| TL        | 12.1d    | 12.4b   | 11.9b | 12.6b      |
| BH        | 19.7c    | 29.4a   | 25.0a | 26.4a      |
| HL        | 15.2d    | 17.3b   | 16.5b | 17.0b      |
| EL        | 9.4c     | 14.2b   | 13.1b | 13.2b      |
| LS        | 9.0c     | 14.8a   | 13.3b | 13.9b      |
| IW        | 5.2d     | 8.0b    | 7.8a  | 8.6a       |
| HeW       | 7.0c     | 10.2b   | 10.7b | 11.3b      |
| NC        | 27.2b    | 34.6a   | 25.0a | 27.6b      |
| HG        | 44.6b    | 48.1a   | 40.5b | 45.1b      |
| PG        | 39.0d    | 41.3a   | 33.9b | 36.9b      |
| TN        | 14.0d    | 10.7b   | 11.4a | 11.6a      |

***Means within a row with the same superscripts are not significantly different (P < 0.05). T&R Farm: Crossbred samples from Teaching and Research farm; Igbara, IAR&T, Ogbooro are the local animals sampled from Igbara Odo, IAR&T and Ogbooro respectively. TN = measured by counting, LW = measured in kg and other variables measured in cm; LW = live weight, BL = body length, WH = wither height, RH = rump height, SW = shoulder width, HW = hip width, RL = rump length, RW = rump width, TL = tail length, BH = breast height, HL = head length, EL = ear length, LS = length of snout, IW = inter orbital width, HeW = head width, NC = neck circumference, HG = heart girth, PG = paunch girth.
Table 2. Correlation coefficients among live weight and morphometric traits in NIPs and crossbred pigs.

| Location | Sex | Age | BL | WH | RH | SW | HW | RL | TL | BH | HL | EL | LS | IW | HeW | NC | HG | PG |
|----------|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| All M    | All | 0.83| 0.70| 0.61| 0.62| 0.61| 0.66| 0.83| 0.66| 0.66| 0.60| 0.79| 0.79| 0.74 |
| All F    | All | 0.86| 0.70| 0.62| 0.85| 0.62| 0.76| 0.83| 0.76| 0.83| 0.74 |
| T&R Both | All | 0.91| 0.88| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86| 0.86 |
| T&R Both | 4 - 12 | 0.86| 0.94| 0.88 |
| T&R Both | 12 - 24 | 0.82| 0.71 |
| Igbara Both | All | 0.94| 0.92| 0.64| 0.70| 0.66| 0.74| 0.68| 0.92| 0.81| 0.92| 0.93| 0.73| 0.70| 0.93| 0.95| 0.93 |
| Igbara Both | All | 0.97| 0.90| 0.95| 0.89| 0.87| 0.90| 0.93| 0.90| 0.90| 0.67| 0.85| 0.91| 0.97| 0.97| 0.96 |
| Ogborno Both | All | 0.95| 0.96| 0.96| 0.88| 0.62| 0.74| 0.63| 0.67| 0.93| 0.55| 0.72| 0.79| 0.79| 0.67| 0.93| 0.96| 0.97 |
| Local Both | All | 0.93| 0.91| 0.71| 0.61| 0.68| 0.71| 0.72| 0.90| 0.69| 0.76| 0.82| 0.72| 0.83| 0.94| 0.89 |
| Local Both | 12 - 24 | 0.88| 0.79| 0.76| 0.65| 0.74| 0.83| 0.77| 0.70| 0.90| 0.80 | 0.71| 0.92| 0.83 |
| Local Both | 24 - 48 | 0.91| 0.88| 0.87 | 0.71| 0.92| 0.83 | 0.90| 0.80 | 0.96| 0.97 | 0.96| 0.97| 0.96| 0.97| 0.96| 0.97 |

P < 0.0001 level of significance. N.B: Only P < 0.0001 level of significance were included in the table. All: this is the all the 120 animals sampled from the four different locations; Local: this is the 79 local animals sampled from the three different locations; T&R: Crossbred samples from Teaching and Research farm; Igbara, IAR&T, Ogborno are the local animals sampled from Igbara Odo, IAR&T and Ogborno respectively. LW = live weight, BL = body length, WH = wither height, RH = rump height, SW = shoulder width, HW = hip width, RL = rump length, RW = rump width, TL = tail length, BH = breast height, HL = head length, EL = ear length, LS = length of snout, IW = inter orbital width, HeW = head width, NC = neck circumference, HG = heart girth, PG = paunch girth.

Table 3. Least-squares means by breed type and the corresponding levels of significance.

| Variables (cm) | Crossbred pigs | Local pigs |
|----------------|----------------|------------|
| LW             | 20.5<sup>a</sup> | 16.4<sup>b</sup> |
| BL             | 50.3<sup>a</sup> | 36.6<sup>b</sup> |
| WH             | 40.7<sup>a</sup> | 26.1<sup>b</sup> |
| RH             | 44.1<sup>a</sup> | 28.0<sup>b</sup> |
| SW             | 10.8            | 10.4        |
| HW             | 9.9<sup>a</sup> | 9.7<sup>b</sup> |
| RL             | 11.1            | 10.3        |
| RW             | 9.4<sup>a</sup> | 9.5<sup>b</sup> |
| TL             | 12.5<sup>a</sup> | 12.0<sup>b</sup> |
| BH             | 21.1            | 22.0        |
| HL             | 15.5            | 16.3        |
| EL             | 10.3<sup>a</sup> | 12.95<sup>b</sup> |
| LS             | 9.9<sup>a</sup> | 13.5<sup>b</sup> |
| IW             | 5.6<sup>a</sup> | 7.9<sup>b</sup> |
| HeW            | 7.9<sup>a</sup> | 10.3<sup>b</sup> |
| NC             | 28.8<sup>a</sup> | 24.3<sup>b</sup> |
| HG             | 45.6<sup>a</sup> | 38.0<sup>b</sup> |
| PG             | 40.7<sup>a</sup> | 31.0<sup>b</sup> |
| TN (No.)       | 14.0<sup>a</sup> | 11.5<sup>b</sup> |

Crossbred pigs (Crossbred); Local pigs: Nigerian Indigenous Pigs (NIPs). Means with the same superscript are not significantly different (P < 0.05). TN = measured by counting, LW = measured in kg and other variables measured in cm; LW = live weight, BL = body length, WH = wither height, RH = rump height, SW = shoulder width, HW = hip width, RL = rump length, RW = rump width, TL = tail length, BH = breast height, HL = head length, EL = ear length, LS = length of snout, IW = inter orbital width, HeW = head width, NC = neck circumference, HG = heart girth, PG = paunch girth.

NIP was (LW = −25.71 + 0.43 HG + 2.21 TL; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.93) and for females (LW = 28.27 + 0.5 HG + 2.22 IW; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.96). The best model for male CBP was (LW = −8.89 + 0.25 RH + 0.35 BL; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.84) and for females (LW = 13.01 + 0.44 RH + 0.27 BL; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.94). Higher HG and TL were established as morphometric traits useful for predicting the live weight of male NIP while HG and IW for female NIP in Nigeria. For CBP, BL and RH were useful for predicting live weight in both sexes.

The low mean live weight and body measurements recorded in samples from Igbara Odo, IAR&T, and Ogborno show that the NIP are generally smaller than imported commercial pigs and their crossbreds. For example, in Tanzania, [17] recorded a range of live BW, from 30 to 64 kg, in adult local pigs. Similarly [18] reported BWs of 38.9 ± 1.49 kg for five months and 106.3 ± 0.31 kg for one year old Ghoongroo pigs in India. These contrasting differences may be driven by environmental influences such as climate, nutrition, and management. However, our study agrees with the findings of [4] that indigenous breeds are smaller with shorter legs than exotic types. Smaller size may yield a greater ability to survive under the harsh conditions than larger size, as an evolutionary adaptation to conditions of low-input production [19]. The longer snout, wider head and longer erect ears indicates that the NIP represents a largely unselected genetic group of pigs [20]. Confirmed higher fat deposition at the shoulder region than at the rump area. Breeds do not differ significantly (P < 0.05) between SW, HW, RW, BH, and HL. The longer snout observed in IAR&T, Igbara Odo, and Ogborno is characteristic of West African indigenous pigs and this is a distinguishing
physical feature of this genetic group. Previously, [17, 21-23] reported a long, straight, pointed snout, and strong jaws in NIP and local pigs respectively. The odd TN of NIP is similar to Mexican hairless pigs [24], Kele indigenous pigs found in southwest China [25], Chato Murciano pigs [26], local pigs in Tanzania [17] and Majorcan black pigs in Spain [27]. In some cases, the lower TN in the NIP serves to differentiate them from CBP, although the ranges overlap.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

NIP has the potential to be developed in order to contribute significantly to the indigenous pig industry based on their positive qualities such as a valuable source of meat and secondary income to the rural household economy, the hardiness and adaptability to harsh management conditions and in view of the breed going into extinction. HG fits best in the linear regression model (R^2 = 0.89), and is useful for predicting body weight in NIP. The character is useful for predicting boar BW [8] and growing-finishing pigs in Kansas State University [28]. When there are no weighing scales, morphometric measurements such as HG, TL, IW, BL, and RH are useful for estimating and predicting the live weight in the NIP and CBP. Similarly, in the absence of a standard ruler in rural areas, we recommend using calibrated sticks.

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