Are you ready for the Yellow Card on sow mortality? Lessons learned from data from 250,000 sows

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You will hear about

New knowledge on:

Culled and suddenly dead sows

- Risk periods
- Risk factors
- What to focus on?

What is SEGES InSight?

- More than 250 sow herds are registered with SEGES Insight (>280,000 sows)
- Free to participate

Herds share data from
Cloudfarms
Agrovision
SKIOLD

SEGES Innovation processes the data

Monthly sow survival reports fed back to farmers and advisors

SEGES Innovation - research

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Data basis of this presentation

SEGES InSight

- 225 commercial herds
- > 1.5 million cycles
- 480,000 sows
- Sows born after 01-01-21; inseminated min. 1 time
- Followed until death or 31-12-24
- Multivariate models

Autopsies

- 101 suddenly dead sows
- 6 herds
- Years 2023 to 2025

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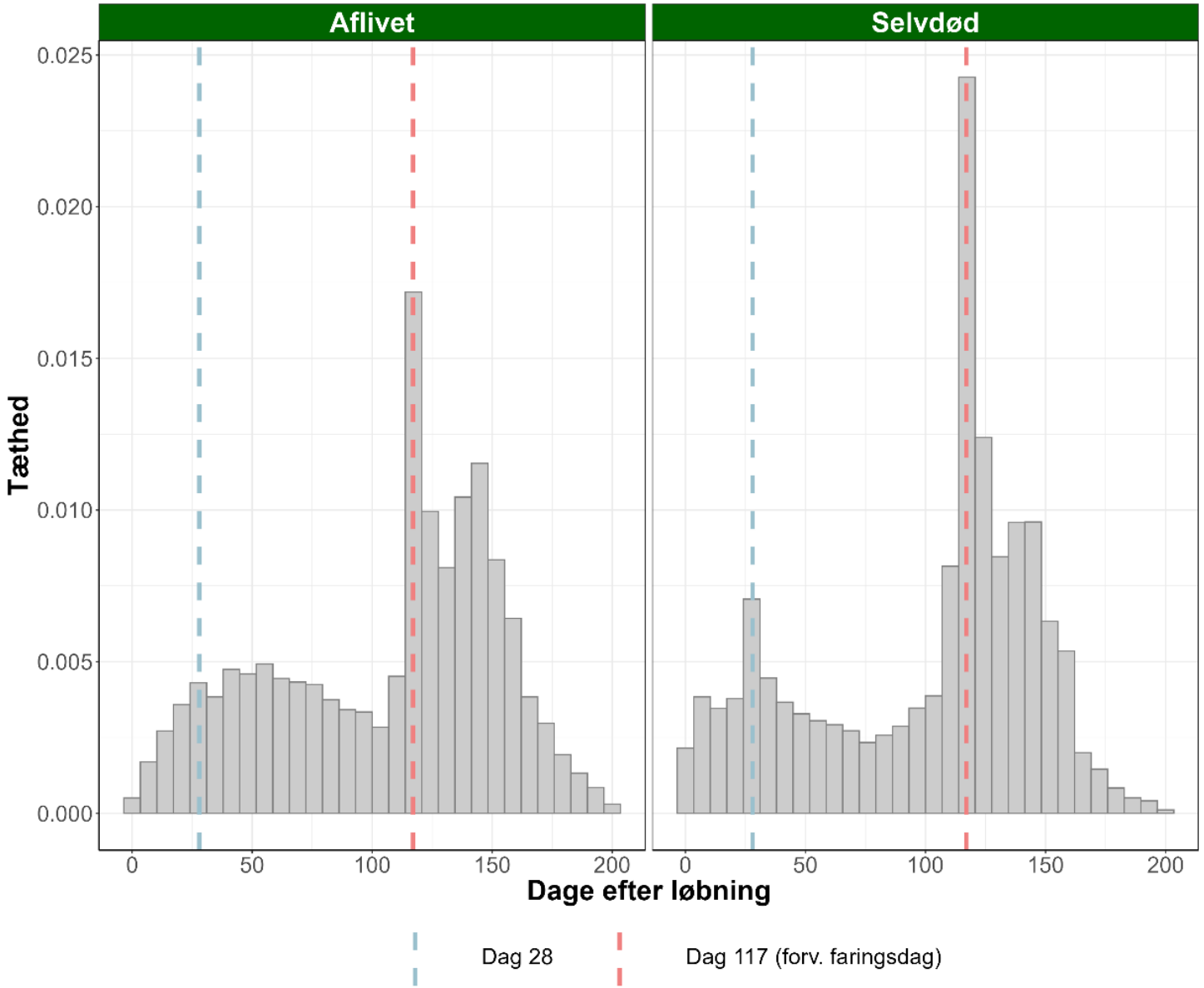
Risk periods for sow deaths



- Culled or sudden deaths: Risk clearly peaks around farrowing
- Sudden deaths: Also at transfer to the gestation unit

Prevention should primarily be targeted at:
The periods around grouping and in particular farrowing

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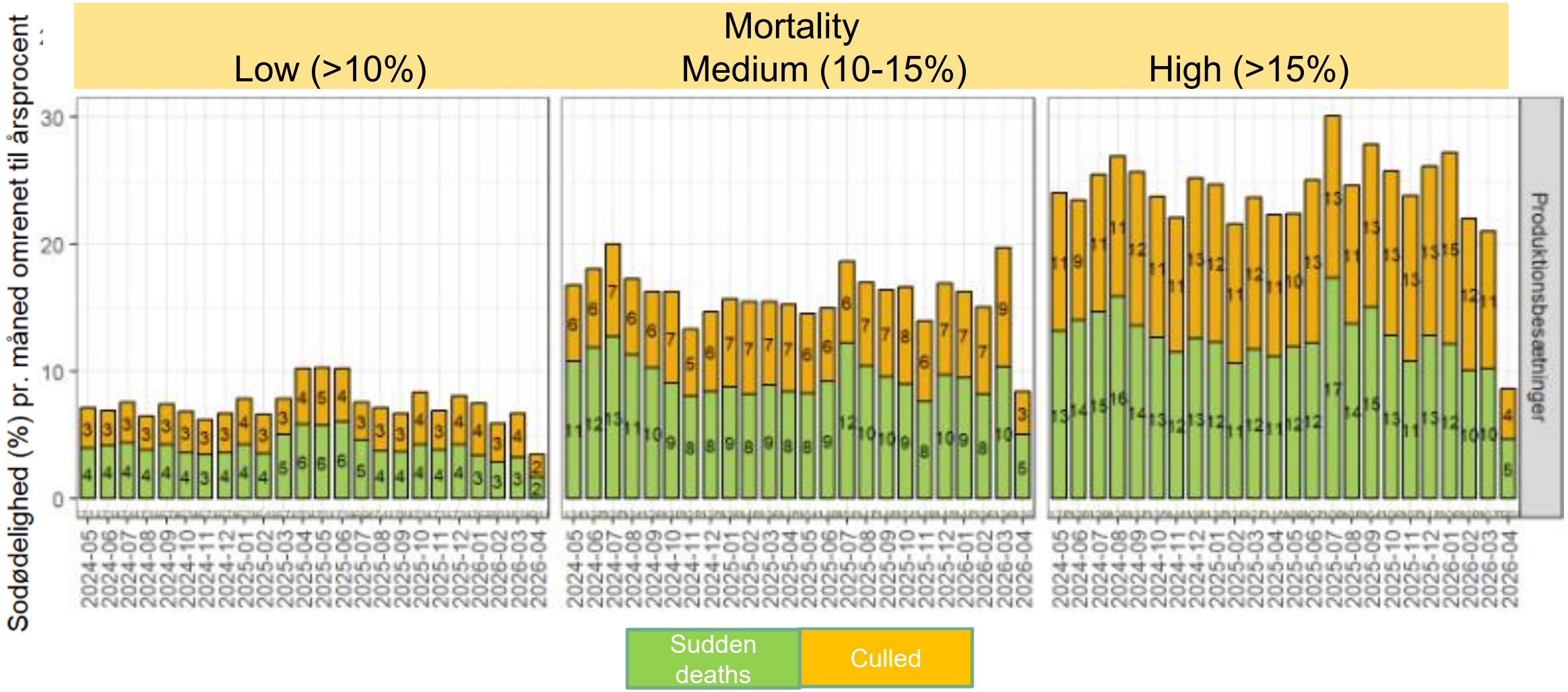

- An almost equal split between culled and sudden deaths
- Regardless of herd sow mortality

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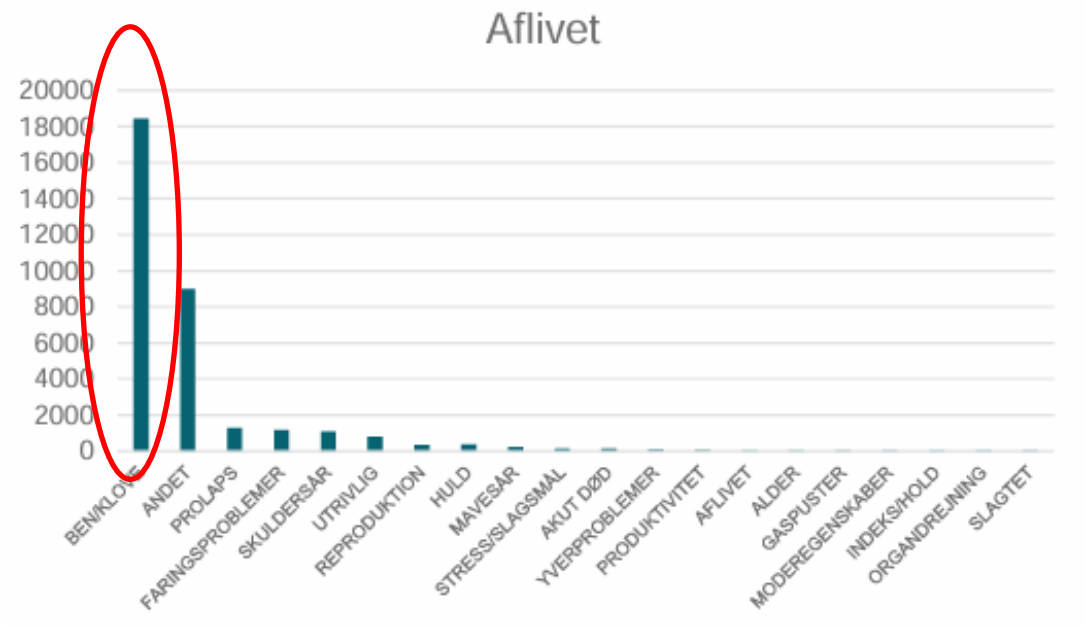
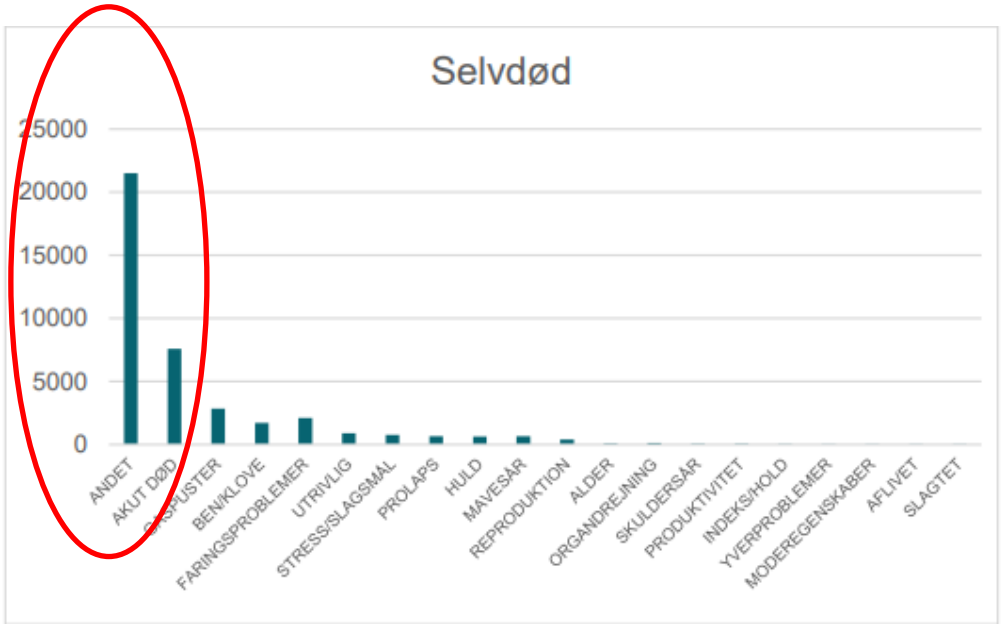
Farmers' own recordings of causes of death





Culled

- 55% due to claw/leg problems

Sudden deaths

- Approximately 70% exit code Other (Andet) or Sudden death (Akut død)
- It is difficult to know why sows die suddenly

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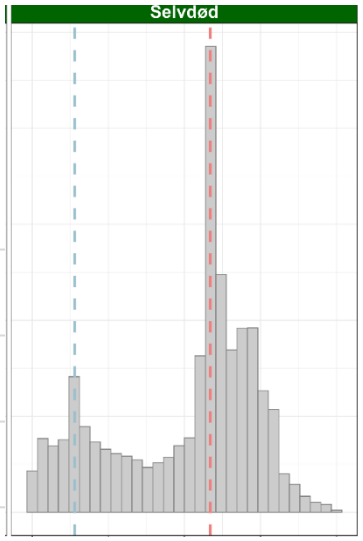
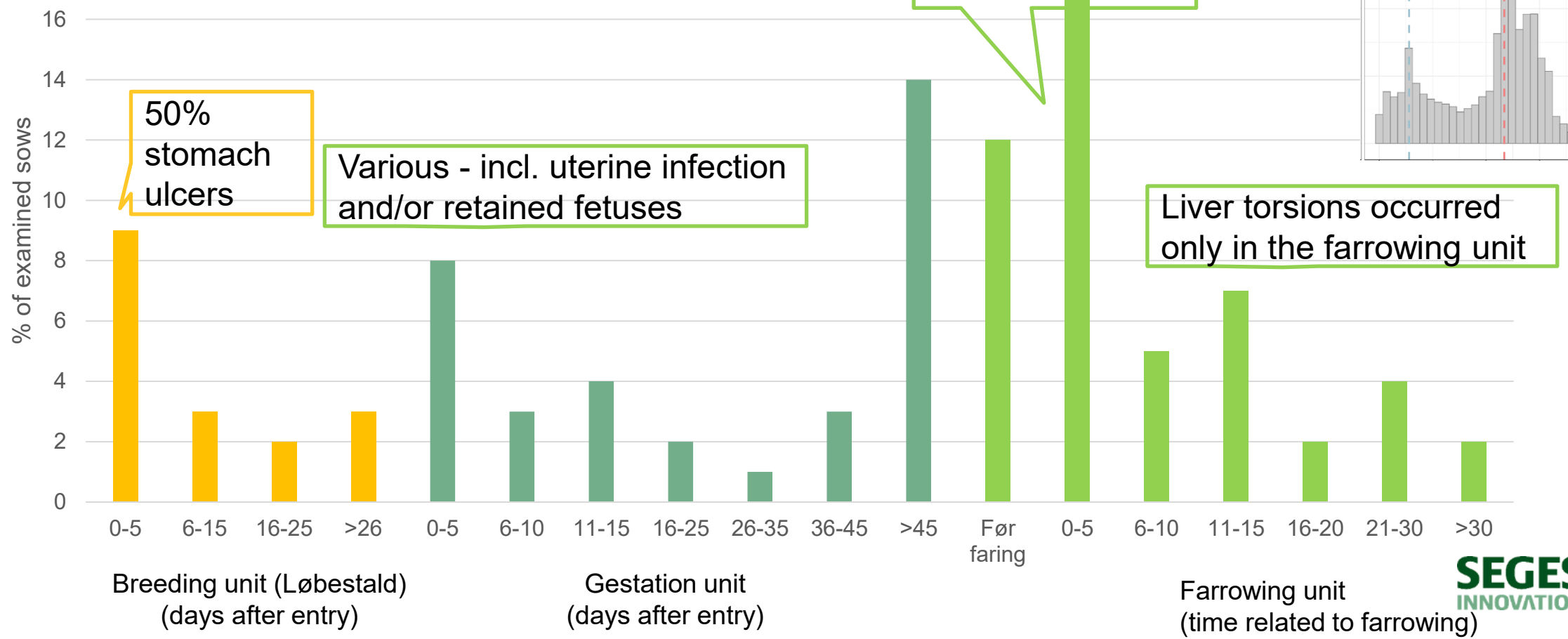
101 sudden deaths

Died primarily at transfer to a new housing unit

24% died of organ torsions
15% died of farrowing-related complications
16% died of stomach ulcers/intestinal bleedings





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101 sudden deaths

Excessive body condition - a possible risk factor for organ torsions?

Body condition assessed by

- Backfat thickness measured at the laboratory (P2)
- Farmers' body condition scoring (thin, normal, fat)

Backfat measurements showed

- Organ torsions – 88% were fat
- Liver torsions – 92% were fat

Farmers:
Many fat sows assessed as having normal body condition

Can improved assessment / management of body condition save lives?

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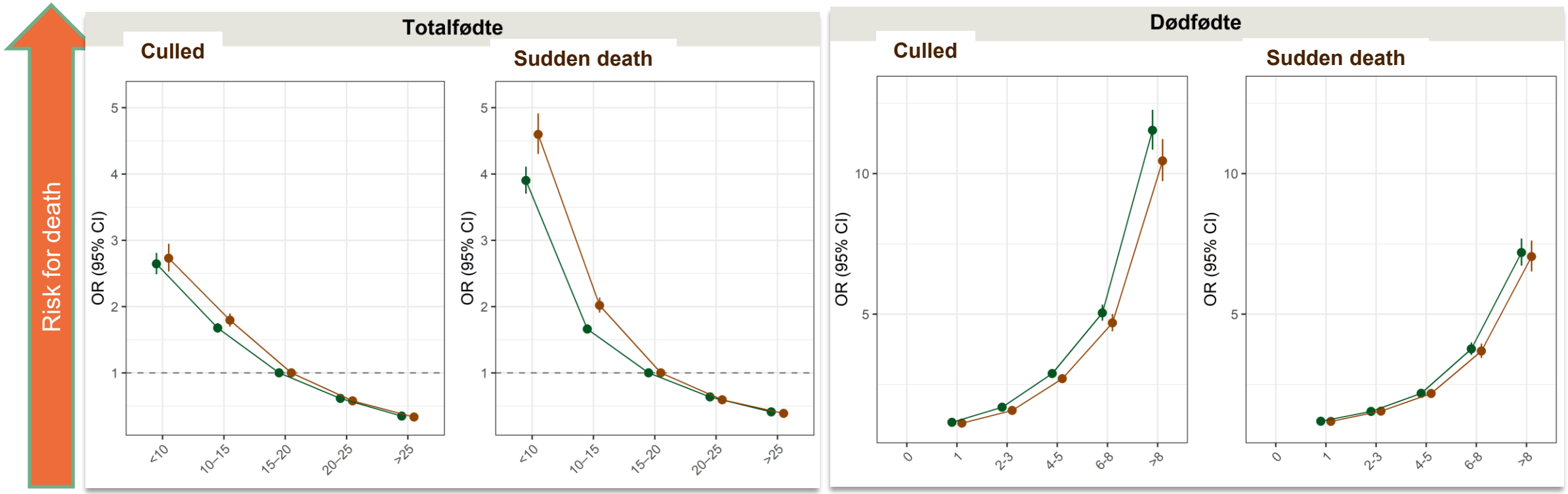
Few totalborn and many stillborn – increased risk



Sows and gilts dead in farrowing unit

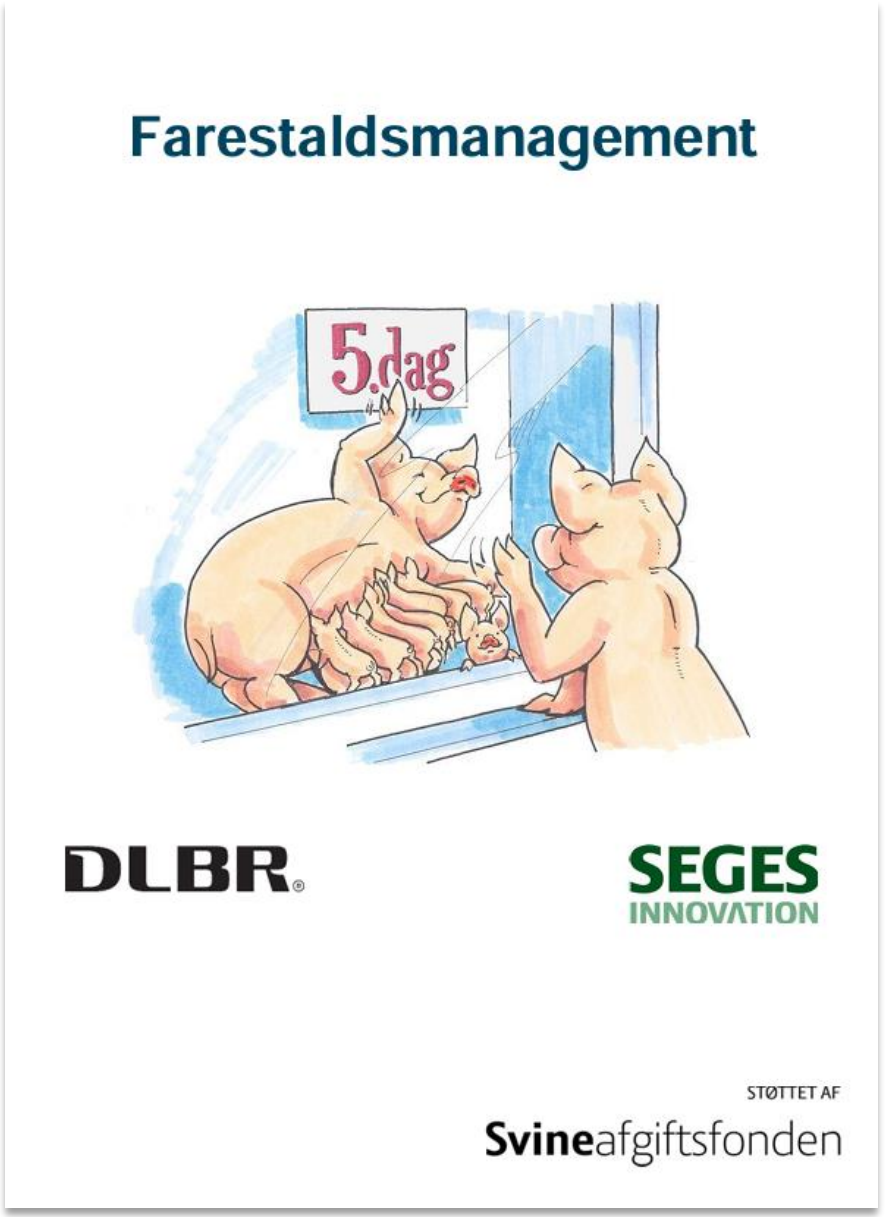
Few totalborn and many stillborn =
Increased risk for both sudden deaths and culling

Reasons?
Farrowing complications
eg labour weakness, uterine inflammation, decomposed fetuses

Period around farrowing particularly critical

Focus on

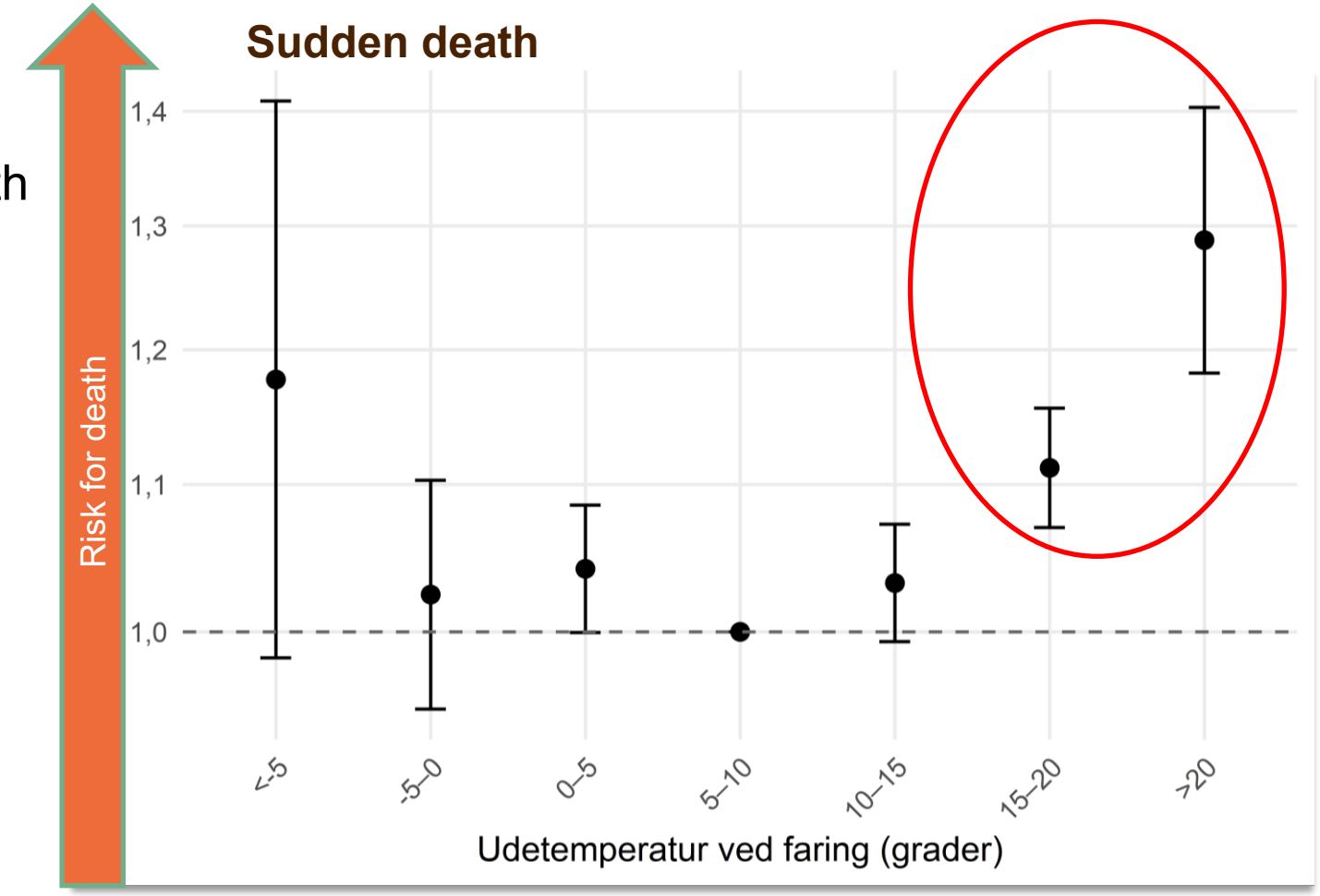
- Preparation of the sow before farrowing, eg
  - Body condition management
  - Adjust feeding according to recommended standards
  - Minimise stress
- Farrowing supervision
  - Preferably check on farrowing sows every 30 minutes
  - Night-time supervision can reduce piglet mortality by >40%
- Timely and proper assistance … and remember
  - Hygiene
  - Care and caution



High outdoor temperatures increase the risk of sudden death

- Average daily temperatures >approx. 15°C
  - Significantly increased risk of sudden death
  - No association with cullings
- Average temperature - day, night and 24-hour
  - Shows the same pattern

Focus on
- Ventilation and cooling
- Water supply
- Feeding strategy
- Monitoring and summer plan



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Feeding system gestation unit (drægtighedsstald)

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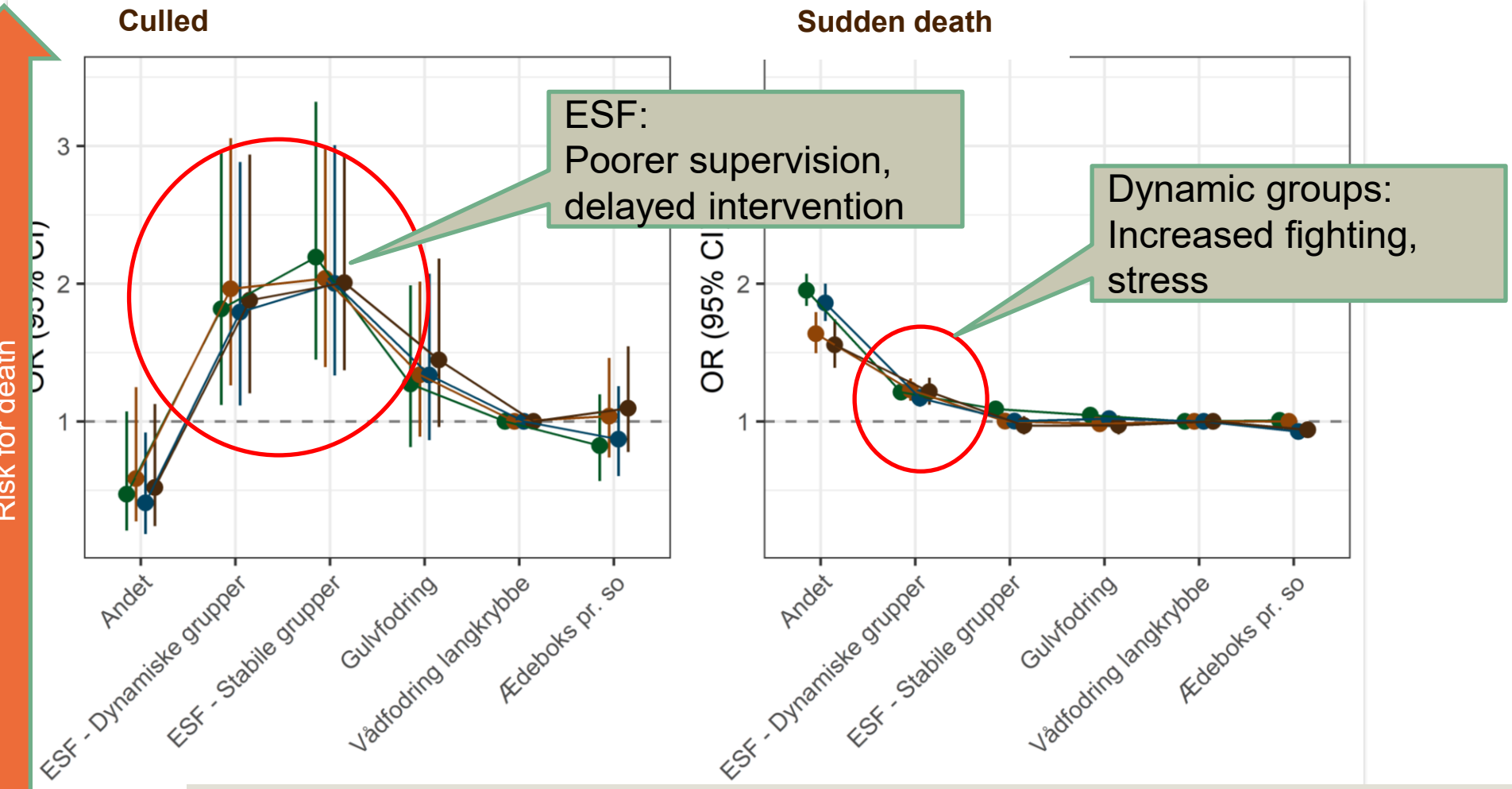
Risk for death



Focus on

- ESF – Improved supervision, eg changed feeding order (æde-rækkefølge)
- Dynamic groups are challenging
  - Sows must be adequately satiated (feed, straw)

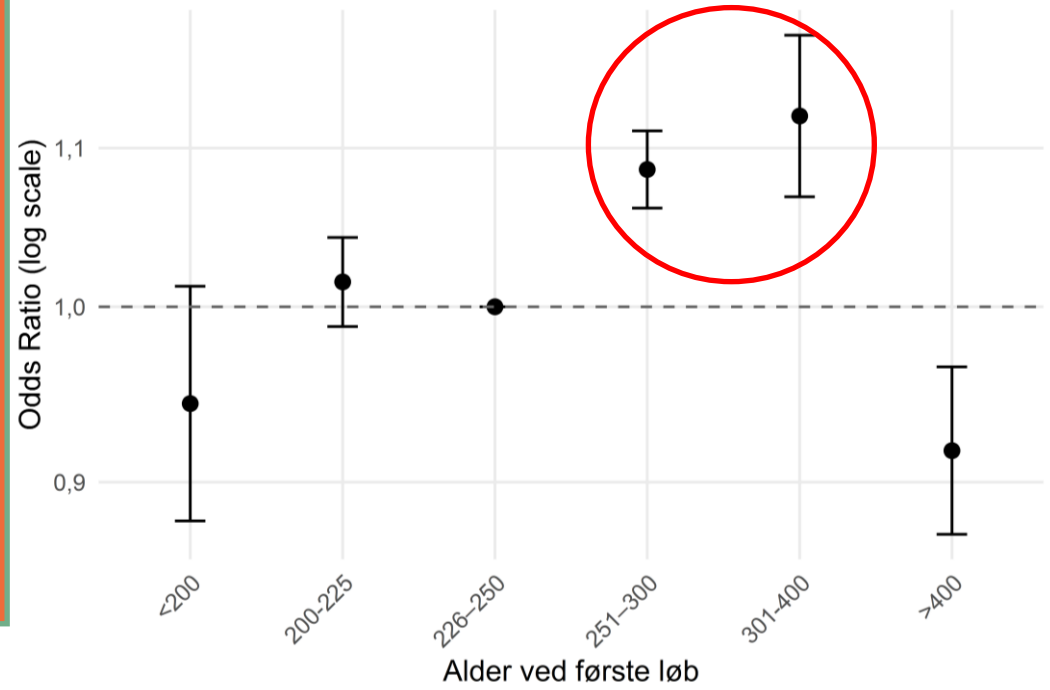
Gilt age at first mating

SEGES InSight – 225 herds

Risk for death

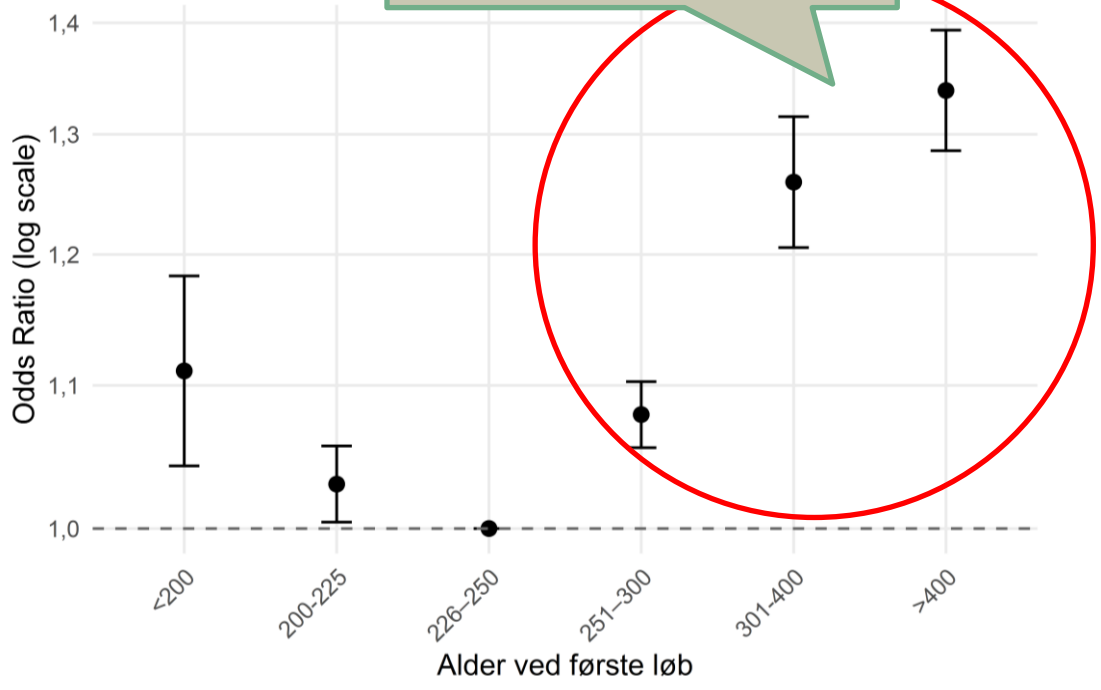
Culled

Culled because reproduction was poor?



Sudden death

Late breeding because the gilt did not grow well?



Sows and gilts dead during entire cycle

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Gilt age at first mating

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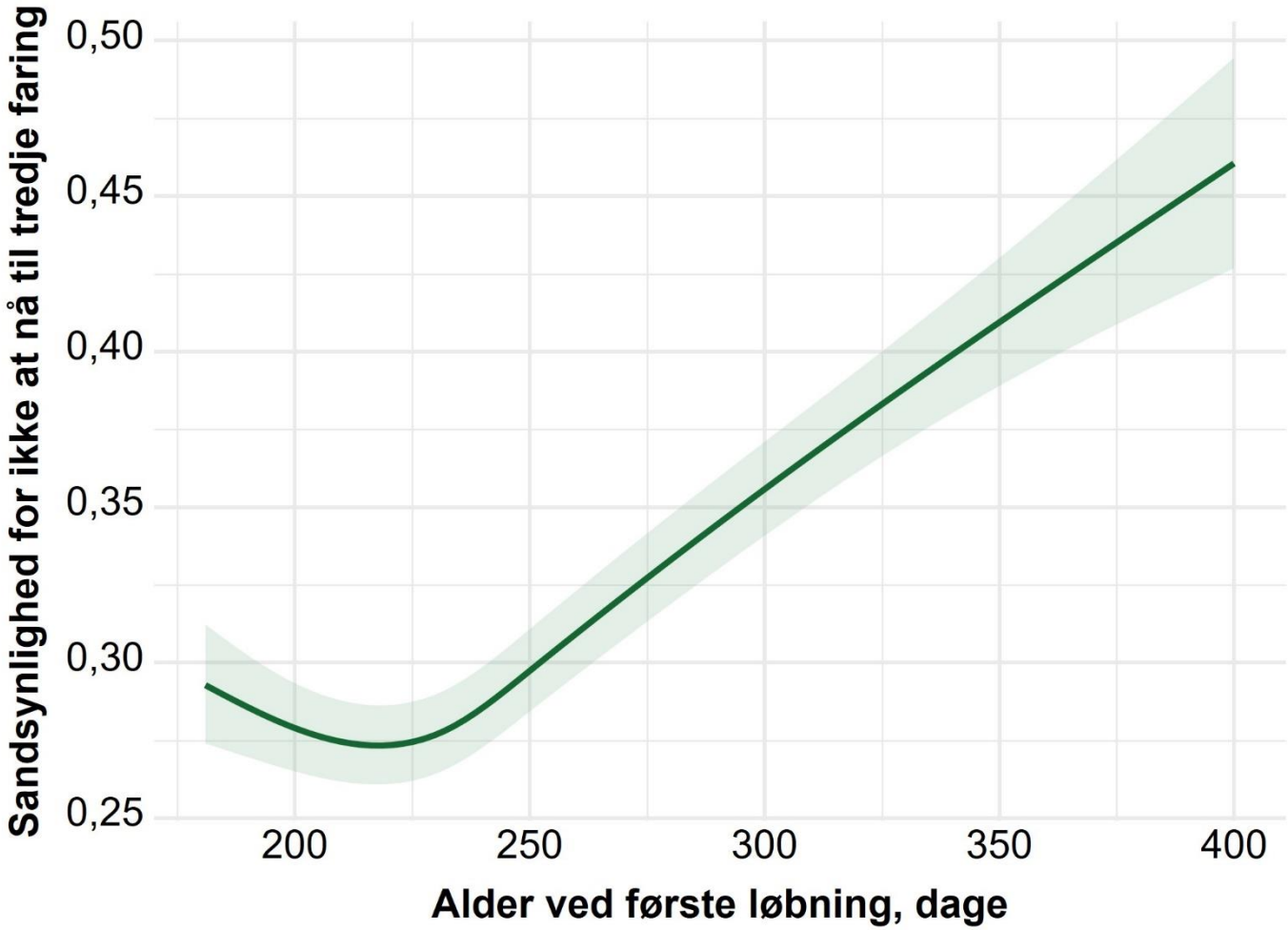

Focus on age at first mating – a concrete and manageable focus area

- SEGES recommends 210-230 days (approximately 150-165 kg)

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Conclusions

- Improved body condition management
  – eg. measure body condition using a backfat scanner
  - Overweight sows are costly – also in terms of organ torsions
- The period around farrowing is particularly critical
  - ➢ Focus on improving farrowing supervision, assistance and preparation
- Average outdoor temperatures >15°C increase the risk of sudden deaths
  - ➢ Remember preventive measures against heat stress
- ESF and dynamic groups in the gestation unit
  - Require extra effort to ensure improved supervision and reduced stress
- The foundation for a robust sow herd starts with the gilt!
  - Recommended age at first mating: 210–230 days

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THANK YOU
for your attention
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