

First business-contacts between Japan and the Netherlands started around 1600 when the first Dutch ship (called Love) arrived in Japan. On August 24, 1609 Japanese shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu granted the Dutch an exclusive trade pass, that lasted for more than 250 years.



Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu

The Dutch founded a trading post in Hirado, Kyūshū. In 1624 another trade and distribution center was founded at Formosa and from 1641 the artificial island of Deshima belonged to the terrain of the Dutch.

Also Japan and the Netherlands have an exclusive very old Dutch-Japanese trade agreement (1913) that allows also their citizens to work and live in their respective countries without too much bureaucracy.

In 2018 the Japanese government signed a trade agreement with the EU that makes it easier also for the Dutch to export pork to Japan.

To my Duke of Berkshire-project starting in 2001 the Japanese and the Japanese culture has played a crucial and essential role. Searching for pork with a better and distinctive taste inspiration came from all the information about the Japanese 'Kurobuta'-pork that could be found on the internet.

During my visit to Kagoshima in 2012 I got the reconfirmation that my Duke of Berkshire pork was similar to Kagoshima-Kurobuta and I found renewed inspiration that I was using the right genetics to create the most succulent pork available in North-West-Europe.

This superb pork coming from the most animal welfare friendly farms would make it irresistible for the high-end consumer to purchase. In this way my desire to emancipate the pig could be made reality. The Duke of Berkshire pigs would live a better life and bring a tastier pork to the meat-loving people than the conventional pork.

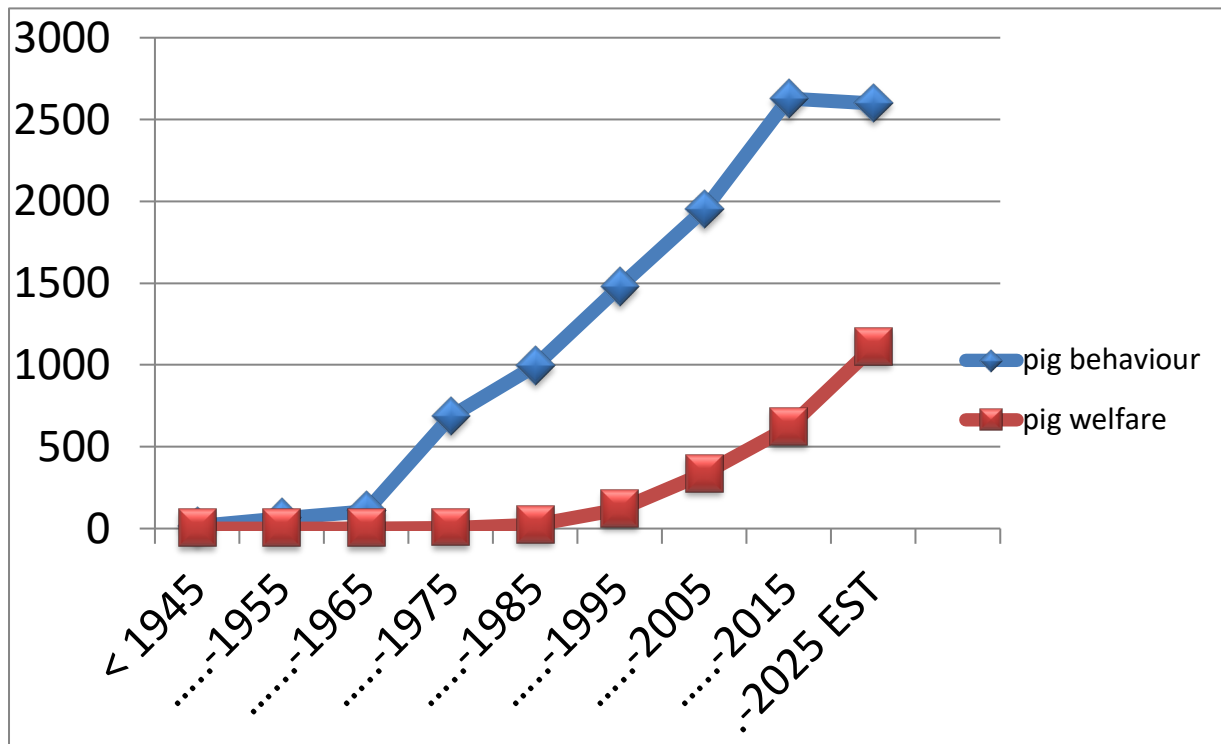


Figure 1. No. of scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals on pig behaviour and pig welfare

During the 90's research in the area of pig behaviour and pig welfare (see figure 1) increased explosively and thereby pressure started to build by NGO's in the Netherlands to refurbish farms to provide pigs, but also other farm animals, with better living conditions.

In this quest for a better life for pigs the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (DSPA) played a pivotal role.

They made the strategic decision to go for a small step-by-step improvement of animal welfare for all or at least most of the farm animals and not for a big step improvement for just a few farm animals.

In 2007 the Better Life (Beter Leven)-scheme was founded starting with simple and measurable criteria on farm animal welfare. In the mean time this Better Life-scheme is an example to animal welfare organisations in our neighbouring countries Germany and Belgium.

In this overview main emphasis will be on explaining 'pig criteria' relating to better pig welfare and how in the scheme of the DSPA this is converted into the so-called STAR-system. 1 Star is the basic animal welfare level, 2 Star is medium and 3 Star is the highest level of animal welfare recognised by the DSPA.

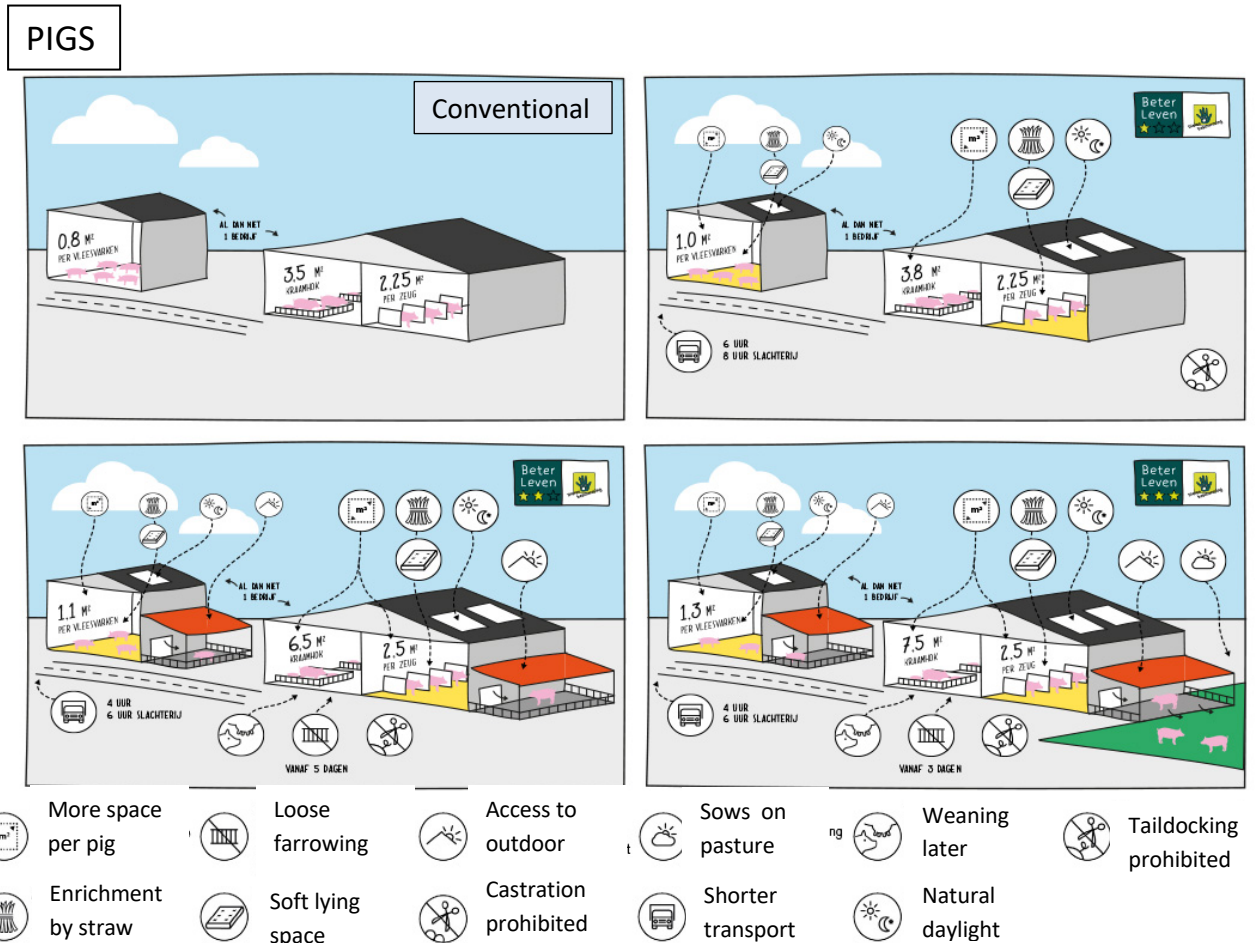


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In the last 12 years this Star-system has been very successful and more than *100 million farm animals* have lived their lives under better animal welfare living conditions !

These STAR-criteria, relating to for example animal density, access to outdoor area, abstinence from tail docking/castration, etc. are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. STAR-criteria for pigs in all categories used by DSPA



As a pig veterinarian specialised in recognising early signs of stress (Pig Signals®) I continued my 750 year old farming-family history by starting my own Duke of Berkshire®-Kurobuta production in a conventional pig house.

Realising this way of housing pigs was not fulfilling their species-specific needs and creating many stresses for the Berkshire pigs, these pigs deserved to be moved away from conventional pig farming to a 3-star level! This proved to be very difficult and it took more than 5 years to find a location nearby where this way of housing that would deserve 3-star recognition from the DSAP, could be implemented.

It resulted in an outdoor-system, where my purebred Berkshire sows were outdoor bred and their offspring indoor reared on straw. Up till today this system has proven very successful and fulfilling almost all needs of the pigs. Two main needs, often neglected in conventional

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farming, like wallowing and rooting can be very well fulfilled and this is fundamental for a high level of animal welfare.



Now, for already more than 8 years, I am fortunate to breed the purebred Berkshire sows without the use of antibiotics! The pigs have a very high health status and are PRRS, A.p.p. and M.hyo negative.

In the last 15 years my Duke of Berkshire®-farm has inspired many pig producers to start reflecting on how their pigs live their lives. Also many consumers follow the Japanese tradition in enjoying Kurobuta-pork coming from pigs that live under better welfare conditions.

Coming from an outdoor 3 Star environment my purebred Berkshire boars have found their way to a 3 Star farm in the Netherlands, a (comparable to) 1 Star farm in Belgium and a (comparable to) 2 Star farm in Germany. In appendix 1 you find a factsheet on the criteria for 1-2-3 star compared to the Duke of Berkshire®-farm.

In all three countries many prizes were won in tasting events and celebrity chefs cherish the special taste and texture of Duke of Berkshire®-Kurobuta-pork.





Now is the time to collaborate again and let the inspiring combination of taste and better animal welfare grow in both countries!

Arigato,

Dr. Kees Scheepens

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Factsheet Star-system pigs and Duke of Berkshire®-Kurobuta farm

	Conventional Production				
<b><u>Space requirements in square meters/pig</u></b>					
Gestating sows	2.25	2.25	2.5	2.5	25
Lactating sows	3.5	3.8	6.5	7.5	250
Weaned pigs	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	25
Finishing pigs	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.3	2.5
<b>Loose farrowing</b>	X	X	V > 5 days	V > 3 days	V
<b>Weaning age</b>	21-28d	23-28d	Min. 35d	Min. 42 days	Min. 42 days
<b>Castration</b>	yes anesthesia	no	yes anesthesia	yes anesthesia	no
<b>Tail docking</b>	yes	yes	no	no	no
<b>Multiple antibiotic treatment</b>	yes	yes	yes	no	not at all
<b>Enrichment materials</b>	chain	straw alfalfa	straw	straw	sandy soil branches roughage straw
<b>Access to covered outdoor area</b>	no	no	0,7 m2/pig 1 m2/sow	1 m2/pig 1,9 m2/sow	continuous 1 hectare
<b>Access to pasture</b>	no	no	no	gestating sows	continuous and all pigs

More info you can find on: [www.dukeofberkshire.com](http://www.dukeofberkshire.com); [www.dierenbescherming.nl](http://www.dierenbescherming.nl)