

MATE SELECTION FOR JOINT CONTROL OF
RESPONSE AND INBREEDING IN CLOSED PIG
BREEDING HERDS

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Abstract

Simple mate selection procedures for the joint control of response to selection and inbreeding were evaluated in a dynamic pig breeding population using stochastic simulation. The simulated populations modelled a closed breeding herd of moderate size (approx. 270 sows), characterised by overlapping generations and continuous cycles of performance testing and selection. Two studies were conducted: 1) where selection was for a single trait under three different heritabilities (ST), and; 2) where selection was for an aggregate genotype under three different breeding objectives (MT). Trait heritabilities for ST studies were 0.1, 0.35 and 0.6, and breeding objectives for MT studies defined general purpose (GP), terminal sire (TS) and maternal (MAT) selection lines.

Within each of these studies, comparisons were made between selection criteria and mating system. The selection criteria were:

ST:

- Individual performance (mass selection)
- Estimated breeding values (EBVs) calculated using Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP)

MT:

- Selection index values combining information on reproductive performance of the dam (number born alive: NBA), and individual records for average daily gain (ADG) and P2 backfat (BF).
- BLUP index values combining EBVs for NBA, ADG and BF.

Within each selection criterion, six non-random mating systems were compared with fully random mating (**R**):

A: Assortative mating with a positive correlation of mates' selection criterion values.

MS1: Mate selection with full emphasis on maximising predicted genetic merit in the progeny.

MS5: Mate selection with full emphasis on minimising inbreeding in the progeny.

MS2, MS3 and MS4: Mate selection combining information on additive merit with information on progeny inbreeding, with the aim of maximising joint merit. Increasing emphasis is placed on inbreeding information from **MS2**→**MS4**.

Results from ST and MT studies illustrated that both response to selection and inbreeding were increased relative to mass or index selection alternatives where an EBV was the selection criterion (random mating). Relative changes in response and inbreeding using BLUP EBV depended on trait characteristics. In ST studies, improvements in response under EBV selection ranged from 7% to 64% with decreasing heritability, accompanied by increases in inbreeding of 1.5- 4.3 times. Similarly, response in aggregate merit under BLUP index selection ranged from 16% to 19% according to breeding objective, and increases in inbreeding were up to 2.5 fold. In comparison to random mating, both response and inbreeding were further altered under non-random mating systems.

Improvements in response were possible with positive assortative mating, with both response and inbreeding under assortative mating affected by trait characteristics. In ST studies, assortative mating improved response by less than 5% under phenotypic selection but by up to 11% under EBV selection. Corresponding inbreeding was up to .34 times higher under mass selection, but up to 1.9 times higher under EBV selection. Superiority of **A** under selection or BLUP index was no more than 4%-8% in MT studies, although four fold increases in inbreeding were apparent.

In comparison, **MS1-MS4** generally resulted in improved levels of response compared to that resulting under assortative mating, although substantial differences in inbreeding were apparent. For example, inbreeding differed between **MS1** and **MS4**

by up to 2.4 times according to heritability (ST studies) or breeding objective (MT studies). Relative to assortative mating, final levels of genetic variation were higher under mate selection options as the result of lower inbreeding. Thus, substantial improvements in the balance between response and inbreeding were made under mate selection.

Overall, non-random mating systems were most effective for improving response where accuracy of selection was high, and where single trait selection was practised. As with the influence of selection criterion, the impact of alternative mating systems on response and inbreeding was dependent on trait characteristics. In addition, the relative emphasis which should be placed on inbreeding information under the mate selection approach outlined was identified as an area requiring further study.

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
1 General Introduction	1
2 Improving Response to Selection	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Factors Affecting Selection Response and its Prediction	8
2.2.1 Classical Response Theory	9
2.2.2 The Effects of Finite Population Size	10
2.2.3 Additional Effects of Selection on Genetic Variation	13
2.2.4 Predicting Selection Response in Finite Populations	15
2.3 Inbreeding	17
2.3.1 Loss of Genetic Variation Due to Inbreeding	18
2.3.2 Inbreeding Depression	20
2.3.3 Predicting the Effects of Inbreeding	22
2.3.4 Inbreeding Considerations for Selection Schemes	26
2.4 Mating Systems	31
2.4.1 Mating Systems for Exploiting Additive Genetic Relationships	32
2.4.2 Assortative Mating Systems	37
2.5 Mate Allocation and Mate Selection	42
2.5.1 Mate Selection Rules Applied to Independent Two Stage Selection and Mating Decisions	44

2.5.2	Mate Selection Rules Applied to Unified Selection and Mating Decisions	50
2.5.3	Impact of Mate Selection Rules on Selection Response and Total Progeny Merit	51
2.5.4	Some Additional Considerations	56
2.6	Genetic Evaluation and Selection Procedures	58
2.6.1	Individual Performance	59
2.6.2	Index Selection Procedures	61
2.6.3	Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP)	66
2.6.4	Multiple Trait Genetic Evaluation Procedures and Selection . .	72
2.7	Conclusions	76
3	Simulation of a Closed Pig Breeding Herd	81
3.1	Introduction	81
3.2	Simulation Procedures	84
3.2.1	Parameters Defining the Simulated Herd	85
3.2.2	Parameter Values for the Simulated Herd	88
3.2.3	Simulation of Records	88
3.2.4	Calculation of Selection Criteria	95
3.2.5	Selection and Culling Procedures	97
3.2.6	Mating Procedures - Random and Positive Assortative Mating Systems	99
3.2.7	Mate Selection Procedures	100
3.2.8	Summary Statistics	104
3.3	Simulation Results	107
3.3.1	The Impact of Selection Criterion	107
3.3.2	The Impact of Mating System	112
3.4	Discussion	121
3.4.1	Simulation Performance	121
3.4.2	The Impact of Selection Criterion	123
3.4.3	The Impact of Mating System	125

3.4.4	Limitations of Mate Selection Algorithms	131
3.5	Conclusions	133
4	Multiple Trait Selection within a Closed Pig Breeding Herd	135
4.1	Introduction	135
4.2	Simulation Procedures	138
4.2.1	Parameters for the Simulated Herd	140
4.2.2	Simulation of Records	141
4.2.3	Calculation of Selection Criterion	147
4.2.4	Selection and Culling Procedures	153
4.2.5	Mating Procedures	154
4.2.6	Summary Statistics	155
4.3	Simulation Results	156
4.3.1	Population Statistics	157
4.3.2	Control Simulations	158
4.3.3	The Impact of Selection Criterion	160
4.3.4	The Impact of Mating System	164
4.4	Discussion	169
4.4.1	Simulation Performance	170
4.4.2	The Impact of Selection Criterion	173
4.4.3	The Impact of Mating System	176
4.5	Conclusions	180
5	General Discussion	183
5.1	Selection Criteria	183
5.2	Positive Assortative Mating	184
5.3	Controlling Inbreeding	185
5.4	Performance Under Mate Selection	186
5.5	Implications for Breeders	187
5.6	Conclusions	189
	References	189

List of Figures

2.1	Operational aspects of a breeding program.	5
3.1	Flow diagram of events simulated for a closed herd undergoing selection.	86
3.2	The empirical correlation between true and estimated breeding values ($r_{u,\hat{u}}$) when selection is on either phenotypic performance (I) or a BLUP EBV (B) for a simulated character with $h^2=0.1$ or 0.6 (random mating).	109
3.3	Trends in genetic gain over sixteen years of selection on either individual performance (I) or an estimated breeding value (B) for traits with different heritabilities (random mating).	110
3.4	The relationship between heritability and final inbreeding following selection on either individual performance (I) or a BLUP EBV (B) for random (R), positive assortative (A), and two mate selection (MS1 and MS5) alternatives.	113

List of Tables

3.1	Input parameter values used for the simulated population.	89
3.2	Records generated for each individual in the simulated population. . .	90
3.3	Additional records generated for selected individuals.	90
3.4	Genetic and phenotypic parameters for simulated NBA.	93
3.5	The objective, formulation of paired merit for sire i and dam j , and scheme code for five mate selection schemes evaluated by simulation. .	104
3.6	Response to selection (Resp.) and percent inbreeding (%F) following sixteen years of selection on either individual performance (I) or a BLUP EBV (B) for a simulated character with heritability, h^2 , under random mating.	107
3.7	Trends in genetic variation, expressed relative to base population levels [†] of genetic variation, where selection is based on either individual performance (I) or a BLUP EBV (B), for a simulated character with heritability, h^2 , under random mating.	111
3.8	Response to selection (Resp.) and percent inbreeding (%F) expressed relative to results under random mating [†] , following sixteen years of selection on either individual performance (I vs IR) or a BLUP EBV (B vs IR and B vs BR) for a simulated character with heritability, h^2 , when mating is at random (R), positive assortative (A), or one of five (MS1-MS5) mate selection alternatives.	114

3.9	Trends in genetic variation under positive assortative mating, expressed relative to initial levels of genetic variation [†] , where selection is based on either individual performance (I) or a BLUP EBV (B) for a simulated character with heritability, h^2	116
3.10	Trends in overall accuracy of genetic evaluation within B schemes, for a simulated character with heritability, h^2 , under random (R) and positive assortative (A) mating.	117
3.11	Average genetic variation at years nine and seventeen, expressed relative to initial levels of genetic variation [†] , where selection is based on either individual performance or a BLUP EBV, for a simulated character with heritability, h^2 , when mating is at random (R), positive assortative (A), or one of five (MS1-MS5) mate selection alternatives.	119
3.12	Rates of inbreeding between year 4 and 17, expressed as a percentage (ΔF_{yr}), when selection is based on either individual performance (I) or a BLUP EBV (B), for a simulated character with heritability, h^2 , when mating is at random (R), positive assortative (A), or one of five (MS1- MS5) mate selection alternatives.	122
4.1	Parameter values used for the simulated population.	141
4.2	Heritabilities ($h^2 = \sigma_a^2/\sigma_p^2$), temporary environmental values ($c^2 = \sigma_{cl}^2/\sigma_p^2$), and variances for genetic (σ_a^2), environmental (σ_e^2), common litter (σ_{cl}^2) and permanent environmental (σ_{pe}^2) effects, as well as the phenotypic variance (σ_p^2) of traits simulated.	142
4.3	Index weightings, standard deviations of the index (SD_I) and objective (SD_H), and the correlation between the index and breeding objective (r_{IH}) for traditional selection (SI) and EBV based (BI) indices. . . .	148
4.4	Formulation of paired merit for sire i and dam j , based on a measure of aggregate breeding value (ABV_{ij}) and progeny inbreeding (F_{ij}), for five mate selection schemes evaluated by simulation (see text for details).	155

4.5	Least squares means for total number of sires represented (Sires) and average generation number of progeny (Gen. No.) under random (R), positive assortative (A), and five mate selection (MS1-MS5) alternatives, where selection is based on selection (SI) or BLUP (BI) indices.	158
4.6	Least squares means for the maximum (MAX), minimum (MIN*) and average (AV*) number of litters sired per boar prior to culling under random (R), positive assortative (A), and five mate selection (MS1-MS5) alternatives.	159
4.7	Response in NBA (<i>s.e.</i> = 0.04pigs/litter), ADG (<i>s.e.</i> = 1.1gm/day) and BF (<i>s.e.</i> = 0.05mm), and percent inbreeding (% F : <i>s.e.</i> =0.2%), following sixteen years of single trait selection for each trait (control simulations: see Scheme) under random mating.	159
4.8	Response in NBA , ADG , BF , \$ response for the aggregate genotype (AGG), and percent inbreeding (% F) following sixteen years of selection on either a selection or BLUP index, where the index defines a general purpose (GP), maternal (MAT), or terminal sire (TS) line, under random mating.	161
4.9	Mean levels of genetic variation for NBA , ADG and BF , expressed relative to initial levels of genetic variation [†] , following sixteen years of selection on either a selection or BLUP index, where the index defines a general purpose (GP), maternal (MAT), or terminal sire (TS) line, under random mating.	162
4.10	Empirical prediction error variances (PEV _{subscript}) for NBA , ADG and BF , and the magnitude and direction of bias, expressed in base population genetic standard deviation units (PE _{NBA} , PE _{ADG} , and PE _{BF} respectively), following sixteen years of selection on a BLUP index, where the index defines a general purpose (GP), maternal (MAT), or terminal sire (TS) line, and where mating is at random (R), positive assortative (A) or one of five (MS1-MS5) mate selection alternatives.	163

4.11	Response to selection in the aggregate genotype (Resp.) and percent inbreeding (%F), expressed relative to results under random mating [†] , following sixteen years of selection on either a traditional selection (SI vs SI(R)) or BLUP index (BI vs SI(R) and BI vs BI(R)), where the index defines a general purpose (GP), maternal (MAT) or terminal sire line (TS), and mating is at random (R), positive assortative (A), or one of five (MS1-MS5) mate selection alternatives.	166
4.12	Response in NBA , ADG and BF , expressed relative to response under random mating [†] , following sixteen years of selection on either a selection or BLUP index, where the index defines a general purpose (GP), maternal (MAT), or terminal sire (TS) line, under positive assortative mating (A) or one of five (MS1-MS5) mate selection alternatives. . .	167
4.13	Mean levels of genetic variation for NBA , ADG and BF averaged over indices, expressed relative to initial levels of genetic variation [†] , following sixteen years of selection on either a selection or BLUP index, where the index defines a general purpose (GP), maternal (MAT), or terminal sire (TS) line, under random R , positive assortative A mating, or one of five MS1-MS5 mate selection alternatives.	168