

# 사상의학에서 바라본 육류에 대한 이해 - 돼지고기와 닭고기에 대한 사상식품론

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## Abstract

### Understanding Meat from the Perspective of Sasang Constitutional Medicine - The theory of Four-constitution food with pork and chicken

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#### 1. Objectives

According to Sasang Constitutional Medicine, human beings are classified into four constitutions. Furthermore, medication and food should be taken differently based on the constitution because Sasang Constitutional Medicine is a field where all living things are perceived from a relative viewpoint instead of a standardized one. If so, what about the animals and its meat? This paper aims to identify the characteristics of the meats consumed, especially targeting pork and chicken as they are some of the most frequently enjoyed ones with the perception of the animals by the Sasang Constitutional Medicine.

#### 2. Methods

We examine the differences between pigs and chickens through the behavior and nature of them such as morphology, sound, body temperature, taste etc and support the observed differences with medical application.

#### 3. Results

From the Sasang Constitutional Medicine's perspective, pig is considered as Soeumche while chicken is belongs to Soyangche. Thus, pork is recommended for the SY type while chicken is preferable for the SE type.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this paper, we are trying to suggest several categories for the evaluation of the constitution in animal, especially for pig and chicken. We hope that this is one of the framework for the understanding the animal with Sasang Constitutional Medicine's viewpoint. And also, it may useful to apply the basis what we have outlined in this paper for improving the method of raising livestock as well as the research of laboratory animals.

**Key Words**: Constitution, Pork, Chicken, Dietary Treatment

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## I. Introduction

According to Sasang Constitutional Medicine, human beings are classified into four constitutions (Taeyangin [TY type], Taeumin [TE type], Soyangin [SY type] and Soeumin [SE type]), and both medication and food should be taken differently based on their respective constitutions.<sup>1,2</sup> That is, for SY type, food with strong Cool Yin Qi is preferable. On the other hand, food with strong Warm Yang Qi is better matched for SE type. Food that has strong Inhaling-Gathering-Qi is more appropriate for TY type, while food with strong Exhaling-Dispersing-Qi is more adjustable for TE type.<sup>3,4</sup> If so, is it possible to classify animals into four constitutions in the same way as that for human beings? This is a question that the Sasang Constitutional Medicine's academic community has been discussing for some long time.

The first supposition is that human beings, who are the supreme creatures of creation, are classified into four constitutions, while animals only have one of the four constitutions. For example, cows and deers, which have horns, are considered to be Taeyangchea<sup>1)</sup> since they are normally calm. However, their Qi energy may rise at a definitive moment, and they tend to lift up their heads to increase power. In the case of chickens or dogs, which have developed shoulders, they are perceived to be Soyangche as they react sensitively to even minor stimulations. For the hippopotamus and elephants, they are considered to be Taeumche as they appear as if they will accept and absorb anything due to their well developed waists. Pigs and ducks which have well-developed buttocks are considered to be Soeumche as they walk in an unsteady way<sup>1</sup>. In the case of SE type, it is recommended to enjoy chicken as it is Soyangche. Likewise, it is believed that pork and duck are beneficial

for SY type because they are Soeumche. In other words, except for human beings, animals and plants are perceived to be born with only one of the four Qi energies that include Taeyang, Soyang, Taeum, and Soeum.

The second supposition is that animals, like human beings, have four constitutions as well. When it is compared all the animals each other, the animals that is close human tend to have more balanced Qi energy than the animals that is far from it in terms of similarity. When the world of cows is observed from this perspective, there are certainly some cows that are more active, while others may be depressed, resistant or calm. In other words, cows also have four constitutions. Thus, it is possible to classify them into Taeyangche, Soyangche, Taeumche and Soeumche cows. However, this classification applies when the difference between each other is used as the standard within the group of cows. If such a comparison is made between cows and all the animals in the world, then cows can be considered to be Taeyangche.

Likewise, different interpretations based on the viewpoints is like considering Yin and Yang differently depending on the standards used<sup>3</sup>. When human beings stand up to face the sun directly, the stomach may be considered to be Yang since it is the front, but the stomach can also be considered to be Yin when one is crouching since the stomach is now on the inside. As like this, when perceived from the standards of the body and limbs, the feet belong to Yang, but they become Yin when the body is divided into the upper and lower parts and separated by the belly button at the center. That is, body parts can be considered to be Yin or Yang depending on the viewpoint. Thus, Sasang Constitutional Medicine is not paradoxical, but is a field that recognizes relative perspectives instead of a standard one.

This paper aims to identify the characteristics of the meat consumed, specially targeting pork and chicken as they are some of the most frequently enjoyed ones with the perception of the animals by the Sasang

1) We named Taeyangche, Soyangche, Taeumche and Soeumche other than human beings as a counter part for TY type, SY type, TE type and SE type, respectively.

Constitutional Medicine. The study also reports on the reasons why pork and chicken are considered to be more appropriate for the SY type and SE type constitution, respectively.

## II. Analysis of Four-constitution regarding Pig and Chicken

In general, when herbal medicine is used, it is recommended that pork and chicken should not be taken together. However, this is not the case from the viewpoint of Sasang Constitutional Medicine. Sasang Constitutional Medicine prohibits chicken for SY type. It also prohibits pork for SE type, whose body is cold inside because pork, according to the Yin principle, is understood to lower the hot property while chicken is understood to increase the hot property<sup>6</sup>. The basis for these properties is going to discuss as follows.

### 1. Analysis Through the Animals' Behavior

First, pigs tend to retreat while chickens advance forward, especially when faced with an emergency situation. When boars are castrated, fed with medication, injected on, or subjected to simple surgery, it is necessary to fixate the animal. This traditional process usually involves tying the pig's upper chin with a rope and fixing the animal to a post. (Fig. 1) At this time, the rope is destined to be untied if the pig advances forward. However, the pig is usually tied even more firmly since it tends to recede. In other words, when it is faced with an emergency state, it recedes but does not advance. Given this trait, it is possible to see that the pig is of a Yin nature. Likewise, it is possible to see the real character of the pig as it retrocedes when the animal is scared even though it normally walks forward. Just like the Korean saying, 'dogs chase after chickens,' the chicken climbs up the clotheshorse or the tree branch very quickly. However, unlike its demeanor when climbing, the chicken hesitates considerably when it is climbing down. This is because the

chicken is very effective in moving forward and up, but it has great difficulty in moving backward and down. Sasang Constitutional Medicine understands the front and up as Yang property<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, when catching chickens, it is very difficult to catch them from the back. Instead, the chickens are caught from the front. Given this character in the chicken, it is possible to see that the chicken is of the Yang nature<sup>7</sup>.

Secondly, pigs tend to grunt while looking down on the ground, but chickens used to 'cock-a-doodle' while looking up the sky. Pigs grunt while looking down on the ground as they try to dig soil. Sasang Constitutional Medicine perceives pigs as a form of Yin energy because they are geared towards the land, and also because 'grunting' is considered to be a Yin sound. A pig that looks down at the land understands its shape to receive the Qi energy from the land. If a pig quacks while looking up into the sky, it may be a sexually aroused pig, not a pig in normal state. In the Korean phonology, '/ㄴ/' is considered Yin sound and '/ㄷ/' is considered Yang sound. This is similar to the difference between 'pooh' and "ha-ha" as one laughs. Chickens look up the sky at dawn when the sun rises and cry 'cock-a-doodle'. Dawn and sky are symbols of the Yang principle while the '/ㄷ/' sound of the 'cock-a-doodle' is understood as the sound of Yang. A chicken that lifts up its head while looking up the sky is shaped to receive the Qi energy of the sky. If a chicken is looking down

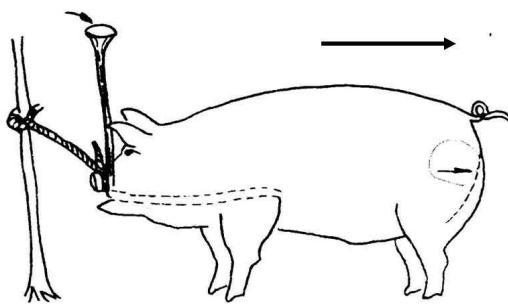


Fig 1. Upper Chin Correction and Medication Injection Method

at the land with lethargy or if it does not cry out loudly, then it may a signal that the chicken is sick. Moreover, unlike other animals, chickens have well developed crests. The chicken that looks as if it is wearing a crown conjures up the image of a prince who is about to leave on an elegant walk. Such an image reflects the Yang principle. The crest of a healthy rooster is even more red and clear. If there is no luster in the crest, then the chicken is not in a healthy state. This is interpreted as the chicken manifesting the Qi energy into the head after receiving the Yang principle.

Thirdly, pigs symbolize multiple births and assets, which are signs of affluence. On the other hand, chickens signify development and hope because of their sensitive and active nature<sup>8,9</sup>. A pig of sturdy constitution is an animal that can get miscellaneous feeds and adapt well to any weather or natural climate. Since pigs grow fast and produce many offspring, Korean consider pigs to be a symbol of affluence and prosperity for a long time. This is the reason why they would go buy lottery once after people dreamt about a pig. People also use pigs for business opening ceremonies because of what pigs represent. This is based on the hope to receive wealth from the convergence of the pigs' Qi energy. Moreover, there are many piggy banks that are shaped like a pig. This again symbolizes the commonly held perception that money is gathered by the Yin nature of pigs. Meanwhile, chickens are very sensitive animals, and they have very active and bustling movements. A chicken is sensitive to even the slightest sounds, and its gait is sometimes as light as its wings. These behaviors are manifested because the chicken's character corresponds to the Yang nature. When someone walks silently into the chicken cages, most of the chickens would react very sensitively and move around in a bustling manner. If there is a chicken in the group that is sitting alone or one that moves slowly, it most likely means that the chicken is sick. Accordingly, chickens are given as presents for newly-weds during the wedding ceremony to signify a new beginning, as well as to represent ad-

vancement and hope.

## 2. Analysis through the Animals' Nature

First, pig is of a shape such that its Qi energy gathers in the buttocks, thus becoming Soeumche. On the other hand, chickens have a stronger shoulder area, which is belongs to Soyangche. Sasang Constitutional Medicine considers Taeyangche as the gathering of the Qi energy near the neck area, Soyangche as it around the shoulder area, Taeumche as it at the waist area, and Soeumche as it around the buttocks area. The buttocks of pigs are well developed. Thus, pigs often lay low, while chickens tend to spread its wings because they have more developed shoulders like most of the bird species. Among birds, the buttocks of ducks are well developed, and thus it tends to walk unstably. Thus, ducks are classified as Soeumche, and they move around mostly at night and tend to descend into the depth of the water while on water.

Secondly, the chicken's body temperature is higher than the body temperature in a pig<sup>10</sup>. Since the chicken's body temperature is also higher than human beings' one, the chicken egg does not hatch when it is warmed by human beings. Moreover, chickens like cold and dry places but do not like back-alley locations because their body temperatures are high. When the hot weather continues in the summer, there are many instances in which chickens that are raised in a group perish due to their inability to withstand the hot weather. This phenomenon occurs because the chicken itself cannot stand its own internal hot property in addition to the heat from the outside. Meanwhile, the probability of chickens perishing from their hot property diminishes during the winter since the level of activity decreases from a shorter day time. However, the egg laying rate also decreases since the amount of sunlight is lower as well. To overcome this issue, poultry farms use artificial lighting to increase the rate of egg laying. Based on Sasang Constitutional Medicine's point of view, this increase in Qi energy from bright light is considered to be a

Yang behavior. Meanwhile, pigs tend to perish less in hot weather compared to chickens when they are raised in a group.

Thirdly, it is necessary to butcher a chicken by exerting stress on its neck by twisting, while a pig could be butchered in one stroke by cutting its carotid artery. When butchering a chicken, its neck used be twisted to extract its tasty with hot property through stress. This is one of the way to make it more delicious by inciting the Yang nature of the chicken. Meanwhile, pig should be butchered without subjecting it to stress by sticking the knife into its carotid artery in one stroke. If one fails to butcher a pig with one stroke which makes the pig bustle, or if one loses hold of the pig so that it runs around, foul smell may accompany the meat because the Yang nature is added to the pig that is belongs to Yin nature. In modern livestock farming, the following methods are used to ensure for good quality of the pork. After the pig is transported, it is not butchered immediately. Instead, it is left to rest at the mooring site for two to three days. Then, it is bathed, and made to relax by playing quiet music. After the animal passes through a slightly dark, but cozy tunnel, it is subjected to electrocution to the point that it faints, followed by dismantling of the animal parts. If the electricity shock exerted is too powerful, then additional stress is experienced by the animal, which can decrease the taste of the meat. These methods are a way to butcher an animal of the Yin nature.

Fourth, chicken meat is tasty when it is warm, while pork is tasty even after it cools down. Fried chicken is tastier when it is fried only recently, but the taste deteriorates as it cools down, which diminishes the joy of consuming the meat. Meanwhile, slices of boiled pork can be consumed when hot, but it is tastier when it is taken cold. It is possible to learn about the characteristics of the meat through understanding the harmony of the food with the process of cooking. When cooking pork, the taste is very good when sour Kimchi of the Qi energy is added in, but the Kimchi that is only

made recently is not used when boiling the pork since there is no sour taste, and thus no Qi energy that converges. On the other hand, radish with powerful Qi energy that exhales used be added to the beef of the Taeyangche. However, the taste is going to decrease significantly if it is used with pork. Moreover, pork with strong Yin nature should be cooked sufficiently to soften the meat's taste through its function of convergency, which makes it easier to enjoy. However, beef with powerful Qi energy that exhales can be taken raw since the tissues are already loose. Even if it is cooked over fire, it should only be cooked slightly. If beef is cooked for a long time, the loose tissues can contract, which make the meat sturdy and more difficult to eat. There is also a difference in the aftertaste. With Samgyetang (chicken broth with ginseng and other ingredients), it makes the body hot, but when pork is consumed, the body does not get as hot as when chicken is consumed. This is the same principle as when one feels the body get warmer when consuming sea mussel soup whereas one feels refreshed when eating bean sprout soup and radish soup even though they are both cooked with the same temperature. As for the aftertaste, it is important to know that chicken is of the hot property while pork is comparatively refreshing. In general, food with hot property should be enjoyed hot, and cold food should be consumed cold to preserve its original taste<sup>11</sup>. This principle is difficult to understand without basic knowledge of the Oriental approach in thinking.

Fifth, compared to pigs' excrement, the excrement of chickens produces more hot property. Hot property derived from manure that is rotted or fermented is used for the green house. In general, chicken excrement, and not pork excrement, is primarily used as fertilizers. In the case of pepper plants, which do not preserve moisture when hot, chicken excrement, which has a greater hot property, should be given as fertilizers to make the plant more resistant to insects<sup>12</sup>. Pepper is a plant with hot property, and it should be devoid of moisture. However, when it rains a lot or when elimination of moisture

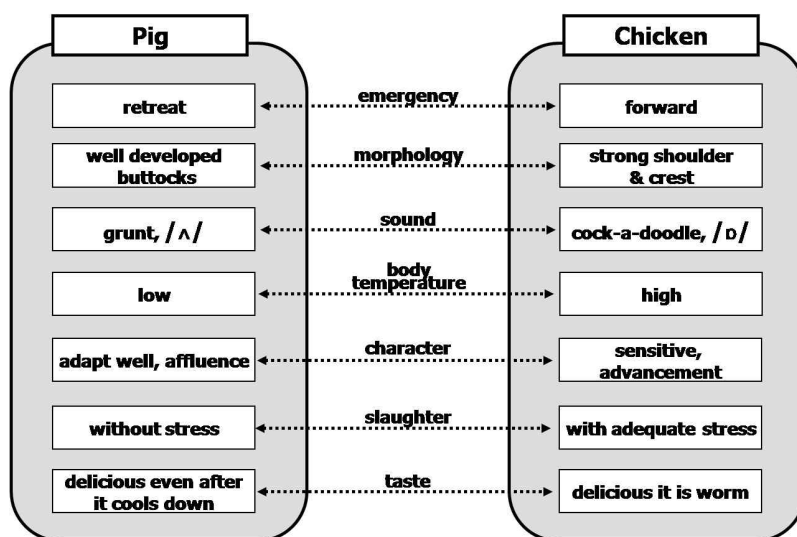


Figure 2. Difference Between Pig and Chicken Based on the Four-Constitution

by the plant is deficient, the plant becomes vulnerable to anthracnose or plague on top of the moisture problem. When pork excrement, which is of the yin nature, is supplied as the fertilizer to cultivate the pepper, the land becomes moist, and the pepper becomes even more vulnerable to disease. Pork excrement is used as fertilizers for rice farms that require extensive water, and this is related to the moist Qi energy of the pork excrement. The differences between pig and chicken, as based on the Four-constitution, are summarized in figure 2.

### 3. Medical Application of Pork and Chicken Based on the Four-Constitution

Due to the above reasons, chickens and pigs share different properties. Accordingly, pork of the yin nature is recommended to the SY type who is of the hot property, while chicken is preferable to the SE type whose body has the cold property based on Sasang Constitutional Medicine. If so, let's examine the instances in which pork and chicken are applied medically.

### 4. Pork's Medical Application

Pork of the yin nature plays the role of converging and absorbing. Koreans eat pork on days when there is extensive yellow dust. Moreover, teachers who speak extensively in a classroom filled with chalk powder, mine workers who inhale extensive coal powder, drivers who suffer from exhaust fumes from cars, and people who work at places where there are extensive sawdust powder and dust all eat pork<sup>13</sup>. Statistically, it is known that those who enjoy pork are less vulnerable to pneumoconiosis. Thus, it looks as if pork offsets some of the powder that comes into the body. Given the Qi energy of the Yang for such substances as dust, chalk powder, coal powder, exhaust gas, and sawdust powder, neutralization of these substances can take place by enjoying pork of the Qi energy that converges. Normally, when one is bitten by snake at the countryside, the pig's fat is either applied to the affected area or consumed. This is also an attempt to neutralize the foreign substance by mitigating the toxins through pork's strong convergence property. In modern science, pork can also reduce the amount of heavy metals in the body. Thus, the most convenient way to prevent or neutralize

heavy metal such as powder or mercury is to enjoy pork in everyday life. According to the Poncho'gangmokb, a boil disappears immediately when the pork caught anew is attached to a scar caused by tetanus with three consecutive times. Likewise, pork is often attached to the affected area. This looks like the prescription based on the convergence of pork Qi energy. Moreover, pork decreases hot property. According to the Poncho'gang-mok, pork is attached to the infant's erysipelas. This is to reduce redness and swelling of certain area with fever. Pork that tends to reduce hot property is also used for skin related illness.

#### 4. Chicken's Medical Application

Chicken of the Yang nature is recommended for the SE type with weak digestion ability. In general, animals with weak teeth usually have strong stomach. Chickens do not have teeth and have a unique digestive structure called the gizzard. Chickens take grain or sand in its entirety into the stomach and manages to digest the food. In other words, the stomach of chickens can melt substances, much like a furnace. Thus, the chicken's gizzard, which digests solid soil and grain, is comprised of very powerful Yang principles. The dry membrane inside the gizzard is called the Endothelium Corneum Gigeriae Galli<sup>14</sup>, and it is used as the material for herbal medicine. Consumption of the Endothelium Corneum Gigeriae Galli can be beneficial for people with weak stomach, and for people who suffer from weak stomach due to overeating, diarrhea from consumption of cold food, car sickness, or decreased appetite. Moreover, it can also be used for urethral leak, which is an illness in which the semen flows down with the urine, calculus, wasting (emaciation) and thirsting syndrome. It is suggested that it can be used as raw or after roasting with 4~12g per session. However, though Endothelium Corneum Gigeriae Galli is ideal for SE type with cold body, when it is used for a time by the SY type with hot property and with dense blood, it may shows some side effects such as skin itch and tumors develop, which

is just like pouring oil to a burning house.

In general, the food that balances out the Yang principle when one is lacking such nature is called the food for tonifying the Yang. In particular, people sweat a lot during summer because it is warm. It is around this time when food for tonifying the Yang is needed to fill up the Yang principle. Samgyetang is one of the representative food<sup>15</sup>. During the hottest period of summer, one of the Korean traditions still being practiced today is to attenuate the heat by enjoying Samgyetang or soup from dog's meat. Foreigners may find it difficult to understand why Koreans say that they feel refreshed after eating something hot, especially when one has sweated profusely. How can we understand the wisdom of our ancestors who used to consume hot food during the summer to re-energize the body to overcome the heat? Part of the answer lies in the fact that human beings' body temperature tends to resist climate change, and it often does not change according to the outside temperature. Instead, the body attempts to maintain a specific level of body temperature. Accordingly, when the outside temperature is higher than the body temperature, we tend to feel hot, and we sweat to cool down the body. When the outside temperature is very low, we feel cold, and our body reacts in a way to maintain the same body temperature. The hotness and coldness that we feel are the result of relative differences between the outside temperature and our internal body temperature. For example, we feel refreshed when we go into a cave during summer but feel warm when we go into a cave during winter. However, when the cave temperature in the summer is compared to that in the winter, one finds that the cave temperature is higher in the summer than that in the winter. We feel that way because the temperature outside of the cave is hotter than that inside the cave. In a hot summer day when the sunlight is very strong, we feel refreshed when we walk out of a car that does not have air conditioning. When working at a greenhouse during summer, we feel refreshed when we walk

out of the place. Another similar example is water in a deep well. The change in temperature of the water in the deep well is relatively lower compared to the change in outside temperature. Accordingly, water from the well feels refreshing during the summer while it feels warm during the winter.

Consuming hot food during warm day is very appropriate for SE type who may suffer from redness and swelling of certain area with fever even though one may be cold internally based on the perspective of the Sasang Constitutional Medicine. Geographically, food from a hot region is relatively less spicy than the one from a cold region, and this is in line with the concept of the like cures like. According to the Tong-ŭibogam, red rooster is warm and sweet, which is ideal for treating the cold inside the body and for people with a cold deficiency type. According to the Donguisusebowon (Longevity and Life Preservation in Oriental Medicine), ginseng, cinnamon, and chicken are boiled together to treat malaria and dysentery of the SE type. With all these documentations, it is possible to see that chicken

is ideal for the SE type (Fig. 3). This kind of approach is difficult to understand with a Western mindset. It can only be seen from the lens of Oriental philosophy.

### III. Concluding Remarks

Sasang Constitutional Medicine suggests that all human beings have one of the constitutions, which include TY type, SY type, TE type and SE type. Furthermore, according to the constitution, external appearance, psychology and symptoms are different from each other. That is why we recommend that it needs to be applied for each constitution to different types of physiological/biological treatment and preventive care. Moreover, animals may be classified into Taeyangche, Soyangche, Taeumche and Soeumche depending on the level in which they are focused on the Qi energy. It is recommended that Taeumche is adjustable for TY type, Soeumche is for SY type, Taeyangche is for TE type and Soyangche is for SE type according to the dieting rules based on the Four-constitution.

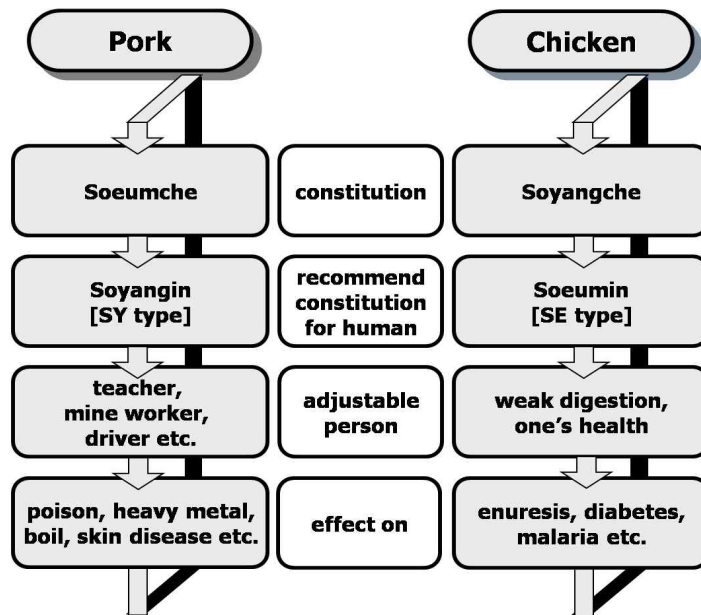


Figure 3. Application of Pork and Chicken Based on the Four-constitution



Pigs and chickens are the types of meat most frequently enjoyed by human beings. From the Sasang Constitutional Medicine's perceptive, pig is considered as Soeumche while chicken is belongs to Soyangche. Thus, pork is recommended for the SY type while chicken is preferable for the SE type. Pig is also considered to be of Yin nature whereas chicken is understood to be of Yang nature. In this paper, we are trying to examine what the basis of these concepts and suggest several categories for the evaluation of the constitution in animal, especially for pig and chicken. We hope that this is one of the framework for the understanding the animal with Sasang Constitutional Medicine's viewpoint. And also, it may useful to apply the basis what we have outlined in this paper for improving the method of raising livestock as well as the research of laboratory animals.

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