

# ENRICHMENT FOR WEANERS AND FINISHERS



*Adding good enrichment to pigs is important for preventing tail biting*

## Previous knowledge

Pigs have a strong behavioural need to perform exploratory behaviour. Under natural conditions they spent the majority of their active time sniffing, rooting and chewing materials.

Pigs explore to find food and to get information on the environment that is useful for future survival. In barren environments pigs will redirect the behaviour towards other pigs, which can eventually result in injurious behaviour such as tail biting. Science suggests that lack of proper enrichment material is one of the major risk factors for tail biting. To provide a suitable outlet for exploratory behaviour materials have to be **varied and complex**, and are most effective when easily destroyed by chewing or edible.

## New insights from FareWellDock

Straw, distributed at 150 g per pig per day, reduced the risk of starting an injurious tail biting in finisher pigs with more than 2-fold whereas tail docking reduced the risk more than 4-fold.

In countries (Sweden and Finland) where tail docking is not done, farmers report using on average 30 to 50 g straw per pig and day equivalent to 0.5 L per pig and day. A survey revealed fewer injurious tail biting outbreaks on farms using larger amount of straw. Larger amounts of straw were mainly used on farms having scrapers in the slurry channels.

Increasing the straw amount from 10 up to 400 g per pig and day had the following positive effects:

- *Progressively reduced the occurrence of tail injuries and stomach ulcers*
- *Progressively increased growth rate*
- *Progressively increased the number of pigs and time spent engaging in straw directed behaviour*
- *Progressively reduced the time spent in redirected behaviours towards other pigs*



## Actions

To reduce injurious tail biting outbreaks, use straw; It might be as effective as tail docking. For this purpose, the more straw the better.

To ensure that sufficient straw is allocated check that there is left over straw before next day's allocation. Examples of other preferred and effective materials are hay, silage, fresh pieces of soft wood, peat. Examples of less suitable materials: balls, hard wood, (short) chains, toys, rubber sticks. Materials should also be safe for the pig and the environment.

## Further information:

FareWellDock homepage: [www.farewelldock.eu](http://www.farewelldock.eu)