



# Straw & Hygiene

Research has shown that pigs need about 500 grams of straw/pig/day to get full outlet for their investigative behaviour. In practice however, the pigs get much less than that, although we know that more straw gives more opportunities to perform natural behaviour and reduces the risk of tail biting. The reason for the moderate straw rations are often that more straw would risk poor pig and pen hygiene as well as causing problems in the manure handling systems. Our studies show that this may not be the case.

## WHAT WE DID

We asked 60 producers regarding their straw usage and occurrence of tail biting on their farms. These results were complemented with practical experiments in three commercial grower and four commercial finishing pig farms. The aim was to study how producers use straw and how straw affects pig behaviour and the occurrence of tail biting.

## HOW WE DID IT

In the survey, we asked questions regarding for e.g. straw provision and problems in the manure handling system. In the practical experiments, one batch per farm was divided into two equal parts; one control and one extra straw. The two parts were managed as usual with the difference that the control pens were supplied the farm normal amount of straw and the extra straw pens with a doubled straw ration. A normal straw ration was around 15 liter straw/pen of 10 pigs. The farmers made daily recordings regarding cleaning of pens. Every other week we made recordings regarding pig and pen hygiene.

24 % OF THE PRODUCERS CLAIMED THEY WOULD HAVE WANTED TO PROVIDE THE PIGS WITH MORE STRAW, IF IT WAS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN ISSUES PROBLEMS

## OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS

### **MORE STRAW WOULD BLOCK THE MANURE HANDLING SYSTEM!**

ACCORDING TO OUR STUDIES, MANUREHANDLING SYSTEMS ISSUES ARE NOT THAT COMMON; **48 %** OF THE GROWER AND **18%** OF THE FINISHER FARMS HAVE HAD MANURE HANDLING ISSUES CAUSED BY STRAW

### **MORE STRAW WOULD MAKE THE PENS DIRTY!**

ACCORDING TO OUR STUDIES, MORE STRAW DID NOT MAKE PENS OR PIGS DIRTIER.

### **MORE STRAW WOULD REQUIRE TO MUCH MANUAL LABOUR!**

ACCORDING TO OUR STUDIES, MORE STRAW DID NOT LEAD TO MORE MANUAL CLEANING OF PENS

### **MORE STRAW WOULD BLOCK THE SLATTED FLOOR!**

ACCORDING TO OUR STUDIES, MORE STRAW WAS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH MORE BLOCKAGE OF THE SLATTED FLOOR