



Tail biting & straw usage

We investigated how Swedish pig producers use straw for their pigs and how straw usage affects occurrence of tail biting. It is known that straw increases the possibility of investigatory behaviour and reduces tail biting in pigs, but how does it work in practice?

WHAT WE DID

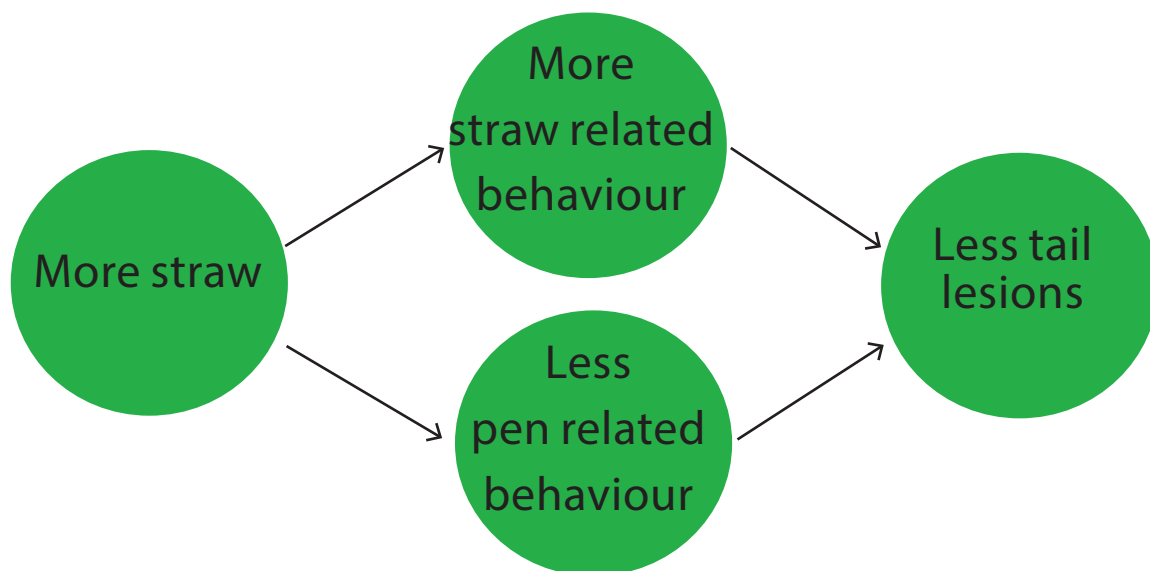
We asked 60 producers regarding their straw usage and occurrence of tail biting on their farms. These results were complemented with practical experiments in three commercial grower and four commercial finishing pig farms. The aim was to study how producers use straw and how straw affects pig behaviour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

HOW WE DID IT

In the survey, we asked the farmers about how they provided straw for their pigs, and how often they saw tail biting. In the practical experiments, one batch in each farm was divided in to 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 litres of straw in a pen of around 10 pigs. Every other week we investigated the behaviour of the pigs (what did they do?) and their tails (did they have any injuries?)

OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS

MORE STRAW LEADS TO MORE STRAW RELATED BEHAVIOUR AND LESS TAIL LESIONS.



THE SURVEY SHOWED THAT

Farms that provided the pigs with more straw saw tail biting less often compared to farms that provided the farms with less straw. Farms that had deep straw bedding had less tail biting compared to farms with conventional pens with partly slatted flooring.

THE PRACTICAL STUDIES SHOWED THAT

The most common displayed pig behaviour was manipulating the straw (straw related behavior) followed by manipulating the pen fittings, floor or faeces (pen related behaviour). The more straw the pigs received, the more they manipulated the straw and less they manipulated the pen fittings. For finishing pigs, more straw also led to less tail lesions.