



## Why is nest building material important?

- Sows have a strong motivation to build a nest prior to birth.
- When nest building is prevented by crating and/or lack of suitable materials, sows get frustrated and stressed.
- Stress may lead to prolonged farrowing, increase the risk of stillbirth, crushing and farrowing-related diseases.



sawdust, mushroom compost, peat or a mixture of such, which does not compromise the health of the animals.” {Annex I, Chapter I, point 4}



*Note: There might be stricter national legislation in place.*

## Inspection method (recommended)

- Farmer provides farrowing sows with suitable nest building material and records its availability during his/her daily inspections.
- Inspector checks suitability and availability of nest building material.
- Inspector reports findings to farmer and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation on farm corrective actions are taken.

Watch the video of nest building behaviour of a sow



## Legal requirements



Council Directive **2008/120/EC**:

“In the week before the expected farrowing time sows and gilts must be given suitable nesting material in sufficient quantity unless it is not technically feasible for the slurry system used in the establishment.” {Annex I , Chapter II, point B3}

For exploration “(...) pigs must have permanent access to a sufficient quantity of material to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities, such as straw, hay, wood,

### Exploratory material for piglets



*In addition to nest building material, legislation requires all pigs, including sows and piglets to be provided with suitable enrichment material. To assess suitability of enrichment material, see factsheet “suitability of materials”.*



# Nest building material

# Scoring method

For sows that were recently moved to the farrowing unit, it is assessed whether nest building material like straw, jute bags, ropes or comparable materials are provided that they can take in their mouth, carry around and move/manipulate on the floor.

The percentage of sows with suitable nest building material is determined. Material is suitable when it is available, shows signs of use or is continuously used up.

## Jute sacks, ropes, straw



©WUR



©WUR



©Aarhus University

To be suitable as nest building material, hanging jute sacks and ropes should reach the floor. The sow should be able to move these materials on the floor. In farrowing crates, jute sacks and ropes should be at the front end.

QR code: Watch the video of a sow using a jute sack for nest building.



© FLI, A. Schubert



© Aarhus University



© Aarhus University

Clear signs of use: Used up jute sack and torn rope. The sack needs to be renewed, if this is the situation in the week before expected farrowing.

Bars of rack being too narrow for sows to grasp around the straw in a mouth-full. Straw is not disappearing from the rack.

Source scoring method: KTBL Leitfaden



Co-funded by  
the European Union



WAGENINGEN  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



AARHUS  
UNIVERSITY

FRIEDRICH-LOEFFLER-INSTITUT



Bundesforschungsinstitut für Tiergesundheit  
Federal Research Institute for Animal Health



European Reference Centre  
for Animal Welfare *Pigs*

For any questions or  
concerns regarding this  
factsheet please contact  
the Centre