

Signs of enrichment use



© WUR

Signs of use of enrichment material: positive welfare indicator

- Providing a sufficient quantity of suitable materials is necessary to enable pigs to fulfill their innate need for rooting, sniffing, biting and chewing.
- Manipulation and exploration of suitable enrichment material with the mouth and snout therefore provides a positive indicator that the pig's behavioural needs are being met.
- Conversely, a lack of proper investigation materials may lead to redirected manipulation of other objects, including other pigs.

Suitability of materials, see also [indicator factsheet](#)

Key qualities	safe, edible, chewable/bitable, investigable, and manipulable
Proper provision	of sustained interest, accessible, provided in sufficient quantities, and clean

Risks for tail biting

Improper (provision of) enrichment material increases the risk of tail biting and ear biting. The use of enrichment materials is therefore an indicator to assess the risk for tail biting.

RISK ASSESSMENT



- ✓ Environmental enrichment

Legal requirements



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

"(...) pigs must have permanent access to a sufficient quantity of material to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities, (...), which does not compromise the health of the animals." {Annex I, Chapter I, point 4}

"When signs of severe fighting appear the causes shall be immediately investigated and appropriate measures taken, such as providing plentiful straw to the animals, if possible, or other materials for investigation. (...)." {Annex I, Chapter II, point D3}

Note: Listed requirements are not comprehensive.

Moreover, there might be stricter national legislation in place.

Inspection method - recommended

- During daily inspections, the farmer records the use of enrichment materials in each animal unit, and where necessary supplies new materials. It should be recorded as part of the documentation of the farmer's risk assessment in relation to tail docking.
- The inspector verifies the farm records (written/digital documentation) with interventions taken by the farmer in the farm.
- Additionally, the inspector checks the state and signs of use of enrichment materials throughout the farm, for pigs of different age groups.
- The inspector reports findings to the farmer and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation on farm corrective actions are taken.

Signs of enrichment use

Scoring method

The inspector's assessment of the use of enrichment materials includes recording:

- **Signs of use:** E.g. bite marks in wood, moist/wet areas due to contact with saliva rather than dry and dusty, signs of wear-and-tear of the pigs' interactions with the materials (e.g. polishing of durable materials).
- **Frequency of renewal:** Presence of materials in pens in various states of use and destruction, and presence and farm records of stored materials for renewal.
- **Cleanliness:** Objects soiled with faeces or dirt will decrease the pigs' interest. Moreover, dirty objects may present a biosecurity risk.

Signs of use



This wood has clearly been chewed on, with wet areas indicating recent interaction. The pigs can push it up and move it a bit. *Note: the closer to the floor the better; pigs prefer to hold their heads in a downward position (as they do when rooting).*



This block of wood has no visible signs of use. If new, the pigs should be interacting with it vigorously for a while. If it is hanging too high and swinging away when pigs try to bite it, it is not having proper enrichment value.

Frequency of renewal



This basket with straw is well filled and gaps between bars of the basket are wide enough to pull out the enrichment.



This basket with alfalfa is almost empty and only small amounts fall on the floor. It needs a refill to stimulate exploration and consumption.

Cleanliness



A new and clean hessian (jute) sack is attached to the pen wall. It has the interest of the pigs: they start with chewing (see wet spots) and destruction.



This jute sack is soiled by faeces and pigs lost interest in it. There are no signs of recent use.

Based on: [Commission Recommendation \(EU\) 2016/336](#) and [Staff Working Document](#) by the Commission, describing non-animal indicators for checking access to enrichment materials



Co-funded by
the European Union



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



AARHUS
UNIVERSITY

FRIEDRICH-LOEFFLER-INSTITUT



Bundesforschungsanstalt 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