



## What do stereotypies in sows indicate?

- Oral stereotypies in sows are redirected oral behaviours and are a sign of frustration.
- In gestating sows, oral stereotypies indicate they are hungry, due to restrictive feeding. They cannot direct their foraging behaviour appropriately to their environment (e.g. roughage).



## Legal requirements

Council Directive (EC) **No 2008/120**: Requirements associated with restrictive feeding:  
 {Article 3, Point 5.}: access to manipulative material.  
 {Article 3, Point 7.}: provision of sufficient quantity of bulky or high-fibre food.  
 {Annex I, Chapter I, Point 4.}: materials which enable proper investigation and manipulation activities.

*Note: Listed requirements are paraphrasing the literal text of the regulation and are not comprehensive. Moreover, there might be stricter national legislation in place. For a more detailed description on the specific requirements, see the review "[Group housing and mixing of sows](#)".*

## Inspection method (recommended)

- The farmer records **stereotypies** during his/her daily inspections.
- The official inspector verifies records of the farmer by comparing written/digital documentation with interventions taken by the farmer.
- Additionally, the inspector checks for stereotypies in different sow groups.
- The inspector reports findings to the farmer and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation on farm corrective actions are taken



*Sham chewing sow. Oral stereotypies in gestating sows indicate they are hungry and frustrated, due to restrictive feeding.*



Stereotypic behaviour is defined as a sequence of invariant motor acts, which provide no obvious gain or purpose for the animal. The stereotypies evaluated are sham chewing (where the sow has nothing in its mouth), tongue rolling, teeth grinding, bar/trough/drinker biting, floor licking.

The assessment should be made 1h prior to feeding or at least 1 h after feeding, as this is the period when the animals are more active.

The presence of stereotypic behaviour should be observed in each group. A sow should be observed for a period of 15 s. If, after 15 s, the assessor is unsure whether the sow is displaying stereotypic behaviour, increase the length of observation period to one minute.



Scan the QR code to watch a video of a pig showing sham chewing (where the sow has nothing in its mouth).



Scan the QR code to watch a video of a pig showing repetitive tongue rolling.

Source for the assessment method: Welfare Quality® protocol



EU Reference Centre  
for Animal Welfare *Pigs*

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this factsheet please contact [info.pigs@eurcaw.eu](mailto:info.pigs@eurcaw.eu)