



# Implementing Enrichment

To appropriately encourage pigs to present their natural behaviours (like rooting, foraging, and nesting) enrichment should have some or all of the following features:



**Investigable** – able to be explored with a pig's nose and mouth



**Chewable**



**Manipulable** – its location, appearance, and structure should be able to be changed by the pigs



**Edible** – something (in addition to regular feed) that pigs can eat and which has some nutritional value

## Gold standard

Bedding in the form of:

- Straw
- Lucerne hay

## Silver standard

- Straw/hay provided as a ball/cylinder/in a rack or dispenser
- Chaff
- Hessian sacks
- Shredded paper
- Wood shavings
- Suspended rope
- Enrichment/nutritional blocks

## Bronze standard

- Chains
- Hard woods

Where gold-standard enrichment cannot be provided, a combination of different silver and bronze standard enrichment should be used.

Significant research has been conducted into enrichment, and below are some examples of how different enrichment has been used to improve welfare and production:

### Sows:

- Deep-straw housed sows showed evidence of reduced stress and improved immune function
- Sows in farrowing crates provided with 1kg lucerne immediately before and during farrowing had decreased stillborns, and improved piglet growth rate
- The provision of 200g/sow/day of straw or hay in group-housed, ESF systems had a reduced incidence of non-eaters; dominant/bully sows display less ESF guarding behaviours
- Provision of 2kg of straw or hay (refreshed daily) to sows in farrowing crates led to greater colostrum intake in piglets, and improved piglet survival

### Suckers and weaners:

- The provision of chewable materials (paper and ropes) pre-weaning resulted in a reduced severity of tail-biting later
- Providing a foam rubber mat on a pen wall for weaned piglets to nose reduced incidences of belly-nosing behaviours
- Providing enrichment blocks from 25 days to 9 weeks of age can reduce a pig's negative reaction to weaning and also boost immune function










### Grower/finishers:

- Providing enrichment (200g/chopped straw/day, or haylage) resulted in reduced tail biting outbreaks



## Consider what enrichment type or types will work for you

It is important to keep in mind that the response of pigs at one farm, or during one trial may not be the same as the response of pigs from a different farm. You may need to:

-  Trial enrichment types to see which ones work best for you, your system and your pigs
-  Replace or change as necessary to ensure pigs maintain interest in the materials and/or objects.
-  Maintain quality by replacing, cleaning, and maintaining enrichment; pigs will lose interest in floor-based enrichment (eg. straw or hay) which has been contaminated by faeces, or may consume enrichment which will require replacing.
-  Rotate through enrichments to keep your pigs interested (especially if using Silver or Bronze standard enrichment).
-  Trial placing enrichment in different locations throughout the pen or shed to see where you get the best result.
-  Place enrichment in areas that are easy to access (not in a corner), away from water sources and preferably near solid flooring (straw/hay for manipulation away from effluent).
-  Utilise racks in large group housing areas for straw/hay.
-  Cotton rope can be fixed to farrowing accommodation for ease of sow access (Ensure that this does not pose a fire risk).
-  Enrichment blocks can be provided to both breeders and grow out stock.

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information about enrichment contact Rowena Davis, Extension & Capability Manager at [rowena.davis@australianpork.com.au](mailto:rowena.davis@australianpork.com.au)

or for technical advice contact Rebecca Athorn, Manager, Production Innovation [rebecca.athorn@australianpork.com.au](mailto:rebecca.athorn@australianpork.com.au)