

# Feeding grass silage to fattening pigs

## Problem

Current production systems compromise pig health and welfare through a lack of structural feed components, which is associated with the development of gastric ulcers.

## Solution

Feeding a diet which includes roughage, like grass silage, increases pig gut health.

## Benefits

A reduction in gastric ulcers leads to increased animal welfare. Additionally, roughage, such as grass silage, may satisfy the pigs' need for rooting and lead to a reduction in tail biting. Furthermore, the pigs are occupied with feeding for longer periods of time, which leads to a reduction in boredom. As grass silage has a good nutritional value, it is an ideal supplement to concentrate feed.

Note: feeding roughage does not negatively impact meat quality.

## Applicability box

### Theme

Pigs

### Geographical coverage

In all countries

### Application time

Any time

### Required time

Time needed to feed pigs

### Period of impact

Immediate Impact

### Equipment

No special machinery needed

### Best in

Fattening Pigs

## Practical recommendation

- Provide fattening pigs with roughage on a daily basis (minimum 100-300 grams per pig every day)
- Grass silage is an ideal roughage: it is very attractive for the pigs due to its taste and consistency. Besides grass silage, grass, hay, and other types of silage have comparable effects on health and welfare.
- To avoid feed waste and to provide good access, place feed in racks at an optimal height.
- Place racks away from areas where pigs rest in order to avoid disturbances.



Feeding roughage, in this case fresh grass, to fattening pigs (Marion Nitsch, FiBL)



Gastric ulcer in fattening pigs (Mirjam Holinger, FiBL)

## Further information

### Video

- The video “Feeding pigs: effect of silage” is available at the [Organic Farm Knowledge](#) platform.

### Further reading

- Früh, Barbara and Mirjam Holinger (2019) Organic Pig Farming: Key Characteristics, Opportunities, Advantages and Challenges. In: *Improving Organic Animal Farming. Burleigh Dodds Series in Agricultural Science*, pp. 287–306., doi:10.19103/as.2017.0028.16
- Holinger, Mirjam et al. (2018) Long-Term Effects of Castration, Chronic Intermittent Social Stress, Provision of Grass Silage and Their Interactions on Performance and Meat and Adipose Tissue Properties in Growing-Finishing Pigs. In: *Meat Science*, vol. 145, 2018, pp. 40–50., doi:10.1016/j.meatsci.2018.05.018
- Holinger, Mirjam et al. (2018) Grass Silage for Growing-Finishing Pigs in Addition to Straw Bedding: Effects on Behaviour and Gastric Health. In: *Livestock Science*, vol. 218, 2018, pp. 50–57., doi:10.1016/j.livsci.2018.10.012
- Research Institute of Organic Agriculture – FiBL (2019) Feeding Pigs: Effect of Silage. Video. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick. Available at [organic-farmknowledge.org/tool/35301](https://organic-farmknowledge.org/tool/35301)
- Holinger, Mirjam et al. (2015) Improving Health and Welfare of Pigs - A Handbook for Organic Pig Farmers. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture - FiBL, 2015, [organic-farmknowledge.org/tool/35307](https://organic-farmknowledge.org/tool/35307)

### Weblinks

- Further documents can be found on the [Organic Farm Knowledge website](#).

## About this practice abstract and OK-Net EcoFeed

### Publishers

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running from January 2018 to December 2020. The overall aim of OK-Net EcoFeed is to help farmers, breeders and the organic feed processing industry in achieving the goal of 100% use of organic and regional feed for monogastrics.

**Project website:** [ok-net-ecofeed.eu](http://ok-net-ecofeed.eu)

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