

# Feeding silage to pigs with an automatic straw distributor

## Problem

Silage increases possibilities to perform foraging and explorative behaviours in pigs. When silage is fed in feed racks, it can however result in crowding and competition as well as increasing silage waste.

## Solution

The test evaluated the effects of feeding silage to pigs with an automatic straw distributor on pig behaviour, silage consumption and cleanliness of the pen. Ley crop silage was loaded on top of the straw in an automatic straw distributor and distributed to the pigs in their loose housing deep litter pen 4-5 times a day (see figures 1-3).

## Benefits

Feeding silage in small rations several times per day can increase the pigs' silage consumption. It can contribute to a cleaner pen and improve animal welfare by increased possibilities for the pigs to forage, root and eat silage together as a group.

## Applicability box

### Theme

Pigs

### Context

Feeding system for roughage, organic pigs

### Application time

All year

### Required time

All year

### Period of impact

All year

### Equipment

Automatic straw distributor

### Best in

All categories of pigs in loose housing systems

## Practical recommendation

- Silage and straw, mixed and distributed by the automatic straw-distributor, contributed to a high utilisation of the silage and clean pens.
- In our test daily rations of silage + straw was around 1.3 kg/pig, corresponding to approximately 0.25 kg dry matter silage per pig and day.
- Dry matter content of the silage affected how far from the distributor the silage was spread. Thus, it should not have too large variation in dry matter content.
- Due to the rather low amount of silage fed per distribution time, the pigs were able to find and consume all the silage. As it was distributed in a large area, it also enabled all pigs to eat silage simultaneously without competition.
- Silage fed once a day in silage racks limited the access with only a few pigs eating at the same time, increasing competition for the silage. Pigs fed silage in a rack did not show the same activity level as the test pigs receiving the silage/straw mix by the distributor.
- The practice requires adequate technique, with challenges concerning investments for the automatic system, and practical adjustments to fit in with the farm-system and buildings. The loading capacity and technique for loading the silage was a limiting factor.



Figure 1: Silage loaded on the straw. Photo: Ingela Löfquist.



Figure 2: The automatic straw distributor entering the pig pen by a rail in the roof. Photo: Ingela Löfquist.



Figure 3: Silage and straw is distributed to the pigs in the pen. Photo: Ingela Löfquist.

## Further information

### Video

- Check out the following video "[Using an automatic straw-distributor to feed silage to pigs](#)"

### Weblinks

- Check the [Organic Farm Knowledge](#) platform for more practical recommendations.

## About this practice abstract and OK-Net EcoFeed

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

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