



TECH NICKEL TIPS

RELIEVING PIG BOREDOM

When Helmut and Katharina Schrott of Niverville, Manitoba, noticed a high incidence of tail biting in their growing-finishing pigs, they decided to do something about it. They realized that pigs are naturally active and curious, and suspected it was boredom that made the pigs start to bite each other's tails.

They give straw to the pigs in the evening because this best suits their choring routine. The pigs learn quickly to expect the straw and crowd to the front of the pen when they hear someone come into the room. This gives an opportunity to spot pigs who are down or feeling sick as well. The Schrotts dispense the straw from a box that they carry with them.

The amount and type of straw is important. The Schrotts have found a "good handful" in each pen everyday is about right. Too much straw can cause manure handling problems. If there is any straw left over, decrease the amount. They have used both barley and wheat straw. Chopped straw or the straw from a rotary-style combine seems to work better because it is shorter and less likely to end up in the pit. Shredded paper works well too.

The Schrotts stress that this is a preventative practice, and should be a part of the daily routine. If it is left until there is an outbreak of tail biting, the damage is already done.

VIDO

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