



FAI Factsheet G1 -Integral Environmental Enrichment for Farm Animals

At FAI we are interested in providing animals with the things that are important to them. Environmental enrichment is one of the 'buzz words' used by those of us involved in the improvement of the welfare and hence productivity of farm animals. Many of our animals are in what we call barren environments, particularly when they are housed i.e. the environment does not provide for the needs of the animal. Our approach is to make enrichment an integral part of the system and not an add on which may be forgotten.

'the facts.....'

At FAI we consider environmental enrichment in the very broadest sense and this is one of the major inputs which allows us to currently produce pigs with their tails on and is helping us to solve other issues such as aggressive pecking in poultry. The major areas we look to provide for are as follows:

Nutrition in a format that keeps the animals occupied - most farmed animals naturally spend a large proportion of their waking time feeding or searching for food and systems often provide what is perfect qualitative nutrition but in a format that can be eaten very quickly leading to problems such as boredom in these animals and the potential for aggression. This provision is now enshrined in law for sows and gilts¹.

Provision for physical and thermal comfort - many of our modern systems do not provide the enrichments required. Some examples given are more obvious than others; pigs in slatted/solid concrete systems, pigs in yarded straw systems in summer which cannot wallow, ruminants in flat fenced fields with no trees or hedges for shelter and shade, free range poultry without vegetation (a legal requirement²) or provision for protection from aerial predators.

Provision to perform important natural behaviours - we have to decide which the important natural behaviours are and for this we refer to behavioural science. Some referenced examples are; pigs without nesting material in the 24 hours leading up to parturition³, laying hens without access to a nest box⁴, calves unable to suckle from a teat⁵.



Family group rooting in woodchip

'..... the FAI response!'

Science shows very clearly that enrichments for animals have to provide them with what they see as a reward (warmth, food, comfort, manipulable material) to improve their welfare. If this is not achieved then the animals rapidly become bored and the provisions are treated as toys which in order to be useful have to be changed every day. This is time consuming and in practice will be forgotten.

This problem is illustrated where pigs are given chains and balls which provide no long term reward for the pig. Such materials however are useful for short term needs such as in lairage. Materials such as woodchip and straw which are used at FAI do provide longer term benefits such as a small amount of feed which pigs will spend a considerable amount of time searching for, comfort, the ability to cool down or keep warm and manipulable material. This latter provision is enshrined in law for pigs 'to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities, all pigs must have permanent access to a sufficient quantity of material such as straw, hay, wood, sawdust, mushroom compost, peat or a mixture of such.....'⁶.

1. Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003 No.299), Schedule 6, 42
2. Commission Regulation (EEC) No. 1274/91, Annex II
3. Lawrence AB et al 1994 Applied Animal Behaviour Science 39 p313-330
4. Zimmerman PH et al 2000 Applied Animal Behaviour Science 69 p255-264
5. de Passille AM 2001 Applied Animal Behaviour Science 72 p175-187
6. Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003 No.299), Schedule 6, 16