

# Minipig Activity – group housing vs single housing

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*Ellegaard Göttingen Minipigs*

Does housing minipigs in groups have an impact on activity compared to housing them singly?

Do group-housed minipigs benefit more or less from enrichment than singly-housed minipigs?

To find out, we put up a camera in front of two pens and filmed day and night for 3 days.

Pen A: 1 female minipig.

Pen B: 5 female minipigs.

All aged 3 months.

A metal chain and a rubber bite stick were available in both pens.

The minipigs in both pens were able to have snout contact with their neighbours.

The light was on from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Each day the enrichment was changed as follows:

Day 1: straw

Day 2: straw and bucket in chain to play with

Day 3: straw and a pyramid to mount and push around

## The A-minipig

Eats more slowly than B-minipigs.

Is awake up to 1 hour before B.

Falls asleep later than B.

Not very interested in B-minipigs.

Afraid of bucket and pyramid the first hours.

Plays with the bucket for hours in the afternoon.

Pays less attention to the bucket and pyramid than B.

Not very interested in straw, because of leftovers from the day before.

## The B-minipigs

Sleep in a pile – wake up when light is turned on at 6 a.m.

Enjoy provision of bedding because of no leftovers from the day before.

Play almost immediately with the bucket in chain. Play a lot with it all day long.

Provision of straw makes the bucket uninteresting – after a while straw sticks to the bucket which enhances the “fun-factor” of the bucket considerably.

Not afraid of pyramid – they mount it and push it around a lot.

Provision of straw makes the pyramid uninteresting.

## Conclusion

The Göttingen Minipig is a social animal which should be housed in groups. In Ellegaard’s barrier facilities the minipigs are always group housed – except for sows during farrowing and lactation and boars used for breeding, both of which have to be housed separately.

This limited (non-scientific) project shows us that minipigs in groups benefit more from enrichment than singly-housed minipigs.

If for some documented reason you have to keep minipigs housed separately, make sure they have enrichment and contact with staff. You can also let them take short walks in the corridor.

## General observations

Minipig A is awake and up 1 hour before B.

The A-minipig goes to sleep up to 1 hour later than B-minipigs.

Staff entering the room distracts their activities.

B-minipigs are more active and interested in surroundings, enrichment and other minipigs than the A-minipig.

The A-minipig uses the metal chain a lot, and often lies in the corner.

Straw is superior to all other types of enrichment.

The A-minipig is afraid of the bucket and pyramid for several hours.



B: seeing other minipigs playing with the bucket seems inspiring



A resting, not interested in straw – B active and curious



B: Pigs in a pile

Male minipigs can be group-housed up to the age of 1½ year – but only if they are used to each other. When ordering minipigs don’t forget to mention how they will be housed in your facility. By doing this you can avoid having to make new groups upon arrival.