

# Toys - enrichment of Göttingen Minipigs

Loretsen, H., DVM, Ellegaard Göttingen Minipigs

Nielsen, P., Animal Technician, Ellegaard Göttingen Minipigs

European Directive (2010/63/EU): ...any restrictions on the extent to which an animal can satisfy its physiological and ethological needs are kept to a minimum;  
Therefore different types of enrichment should be offered to minipigs in order to make them able to express normal behavior and avoid boredom.



Minipigs are curious and explorative by nature



Anchor the toys to avoid contact with manure

## Observation: Bucket in chain

Groups	Toys	Observation time		
		10:30	11:30	14:30
		Score of interest ☹ 1 - 5 ☺		
female	on/off*	5	2	1
male	on/off*	4	2	1
female	ad libitum**	2	1	1
male	ad libitum**	2	1	1

\* Toys are given 10:30 a.m. and removed 14:30 p.m.

\*\* Toys are in the pen 24/7

## Method

5 different types of toys have been assigned in order to compare the popularity of the toys among the minipigs.

The minipigs, aged 3-5 months, were housed in groups ranging from 10-15 animals.

Each toy was tested one week among 4 different groups of minipigs.

Toys can't replace bedding and rooting material. Bedding and rooting material should always be available

## Comparison of popularity of toys (on/off group)

	Score ☹ ☺ 1 - 5	Comments
Plate with bite stick	3	Fun for a short time Ends in the manure
Bucket in chain	5	Great fun! Many different functions: pushing, biting, hiding, mounting
Metal chains	3	Not play – more satisfying the needs for biting
Pyramid	5	Climbing on top and seeing the world from a new angle!
Ball in chain (with food pellets)	4	Great fun as long as there are food pellets in it!

High fun factor:  
\*biting  
\*manipulation  
\*exploring



Toys should be changed and replaced on a daily basis

## Conclusion

The results show that the interest in the toys is significantly higher among the minipigs with on/off-toys than among the minipigs with unlimited access to toys.

The minipigs get bored with toys as soon as novelty is gone. This is significantly illustrated in the table above – the interest decreases even after 1 hour.

Therefore it is crucial for the quality of enrichment that the **toys are changed and replaced with new ones on a daily basis.**

Try to make the day as exciting as possible: feeding, provision of bedding material, provision of toys should be at different times.

Bedding- and rooting material should always be available.

Current observations in the barriers at Ellegaard show that single-housed minipigs pay less attention to toys than group-housed minipigs.

Female minipigs seem to show significant more interest in toys than male minipigs.

Elder minipigs tend to show less interest in toys than young ones.

If the toys get soiled by the manure the interest decreases almost momentarily.

A little walkabout outside the pen is high quality enrichment for a minipig!