



Litter substrate

To reduce the risk of injurious feather pecking, dry and friable litter is vital. With many different types of litter substrate available, farmers find it difficult to identify the best litter for both hen, farmer and farm economics.

Litter selection

A checklist was developed in order to make the first selection in available litter.

Asses litter on:

- Availability
- Affordability
- Manipulability by the laying hen
- Food safety (presence of Dioxins, Salmonella)
- Moisture absorption capacity
- Not causing lesions
- Preferably reducing ammonia



Cut rape seed straw



Cut fibre hemp

Most promising litter types tested

A trial was set up to identify the best litter for the laying hen, farmer and farm economics.

Based on the checklist cut rape seed straw and cut fibre hemp were the most promising types of litter.

- Cut rape seed straw was chosen, because it is readily available, affordable, manipulable, no known adverse health effects, good absorptive capacity
- Fibre hemp most likely has an improved absorption of moisture and leads to a reduction of ammonia when compared to regular types of litter e.g. wheat straw, rape seed straw.

Cut rape seed straw and cut fibre hemp were tested on-farm in the indoor range. The straw was cut in pieces of 3-5 cm long. Each type of litter was tested in eight different compartments, alternately. At the start of the trial, the laying hens were 22 weeks of age. Three times, with a monthly interval, the litter types were assessed for the hens' behaviour, clinical well-being and feather pecking .



Farmers found no difference between the two types of litter.