

People's evaluation of pigs in farm photos with different backgrounds

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Photos play an important role when it comes to how agricultural products are seen by consumers. A team of scientists from the Universities of Bozen-Bolzano and Göttingen investigated how people perceive and evaluate photos of pigs in different stalls. The results were published in the scientific journal *PLoS ONE*.

Around 1,000 consumers from Germany evaluated pictures of a pig that looked either happy or sad in a pen with straw bedding or a slatted floor. The results show that the pen in which a pig is shown has the strongest influence on how the animal is perceived. "The most common enclosures for [pigs](#) these days are ones in which the animals live on a concrete floor with gaps for the liquid manure to flow off. These pens are perceived as very problematic," says the lead author Professor Achim Spiller from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development at the University of Göttingen. "In comparison, the straw stall is rated as clearly more natural and more animal-friendly. Even the sad or cheerful expression of the pig standing in the enclosure does not change this." The evaluation of the pig's well-being shows that the same pig on straw is rated as more satisfied, healthier and happier than in a photo with a slatted floor.

The results help to understand how the public evaluates animal husbandry systems. A slatted floor system, which has been negatively evaluated by most people, is therefore not better perceived even if the pictures show happy-looking animals. A positively perceived enclosure, such as a stall with straw bedding, is not rated any worse, even if the

animal looks sad in it.

More information: Gesa Busch et al, Does picture background matter? People's evaluation of pigs in different farm settings, *PLOS ONE* (2019). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0211256](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211256)

Provided by University of Göttingen

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