

# Bedding materials and joint health: the finer the better

The joint health of the dairy cow is multifactorial. Important influencing factors are feeding, hoof health and the space available in the free stall. The right bedding in the free stall can support good joint health. In cooperation with the LfL Freising institute, the DLG has tested different bedding materials.



## Humidity damages the skin

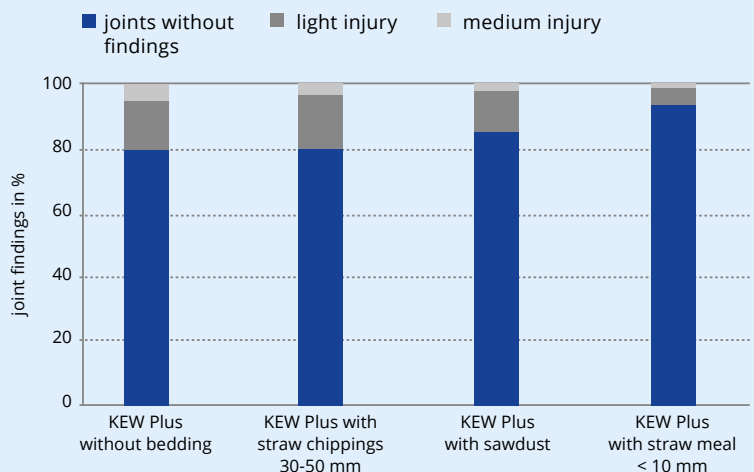
The free stall is frequently soiled by feces, urine or milk. In addition, the lying cow sweats out moisture through her skin. If there is no bedding, the skin softens, which in turn reduces its protective function. In addition, hair roots are damaged and the hair falls out. Therefore, even with modern, very soft lying mats, a small amount of bedding is necessary to absorb moisture.

## Regularly test the abrasiveness of the bedding by rubbing it

Some materials, such as shavings or sawdust, should be viewed critically as bedding because they can damage the skin due to their abrasive effect or due to small wooden parts. In case of overdosage, lime can also dry out and irritate the skin (therefore only use DLG-certified lime bedding). A regular rubbing test on the back of your own hand helps to assess the skin-friendliness of the material used.

## The more absorbent the bedding, the better for the joints

The DLG test showed a clear result: Using the most absorbent bedding can further improve an already good joint health. The rule is: The finer the bedding, the better! Straw meal and straw chippings that are as fine as possible are, therefore, the most skin-friendly types of bedding.



Source: DLG test centre in cooperation with LfL Freising institute, from: DLZ Sonderheft Nr. 21, 2008

