



Using woodchips as bedding for stables: a practical and economic way of revalorization for tree hedges

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In most France landscapes, tree hedges are seen as an element that needs to be managed to enhance the beauty of the surroundings, which means important costs for the farmers or community. However, it can also become a useful resource for many livestock breeders to improve beddings into their stables. Hay is the traditional bedding in France, and it leads to a heavy dependence for farmers since its cost is very fluctuant depending on availability.

Compensate, or even replace it by a local resource such as hedge woodchips can be full of advantages:

Woodchips are way more absorbent (1 ton can absorb 1400L of urine), draining and efficient for bedding compared to hay. Its bearing capacity is optimal for cows and it allows better sanitary conditions (cleaner livestock, less smell, less flies...). Farmers can either install a 100% woodchip bedding with a 10 to 25cm layer, or mix it with hay. One of the keys is to foster agroforestry is to improve the economic return of the woody perennials to build a value-chain and scale-up woodchip processing. In France, a cooperative was set up in the department of Nièvre in 2014 to process 3,3 tons of woodchips (50% humidity) at 60€/ton. In this case, using hay or woodchips was the same cost for breeders, but according to them, it brings reliability of the hay resource and stability of the price and above all a mechanism of resilience when hay prices are increased.

A technical survey made in France on woodchips for stable bedding (French):

<http://www.agroforesterie.fr/AGREAU/documents/agroforesterie-fiche-thematique-utiliser-les-plaquettes-en-litiere-et-valoriser-la-biomasse-elevage-paillage-avril-2015.pdf>



Figure 1. Woodchips used for stable litter, France, Source : Web-agri

Léo Godard

Association Française d'Agroforesterie (AFAF)