



Environmental enrichment and nutritional strategies to reduce tail biting in pig farms

Project context



- Council Directive 2008/120/EC

*‘before carrying out tail-docking other measures are to be taken to prevent tail-biting and other vices, **taking into account environment and stocking densities**. For that reason, **inadequate environmental conditions or management systems** are to be changed’*

*‘ensure that pigs have permanent access to a **sufficient quantity of material to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities**, such as straw, hay, wood, sawdust, mushroom compost, peat or a mixture of such (‘enrichment material’), which does not compromise the health of those animals.’*

- March 2016: EU commission recommendation (2016/336) on application of the 2008 Directive on tail docking
 - Staff working document developed and available to provide guidance

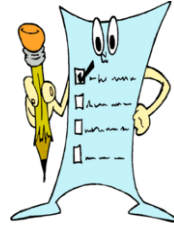
Current situation



- 99% of Irish pigs tail docked
.....Similar figures in most European countries!
- 1. What are the concrete progress indicators for this action plan for the period 2017-2019?
 1. Action plans from all MS by end Jan 2018
 - a. existing compliance with EC law
 - b. enforcement strategy
 - c. the rate of tail-docking at national level
 - d. recorded evidence at farm level of tail and ear injuries
 - e. on-farm risk assessment based on the parameters listed in Recommendation (EU) 2016/336⁽²⁾
 - f. implementation of improvement measures on farm
- 2. What specific steps have been taken by individual Member States in this regard?
 1. 12 MS submitted by end Jan 2018

Work to date.....

1. Survey



2. Compressed straw



3. Use of wood

1. Hard

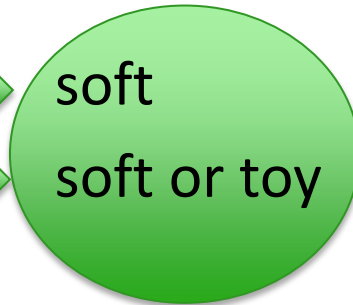


soft

2. Hard

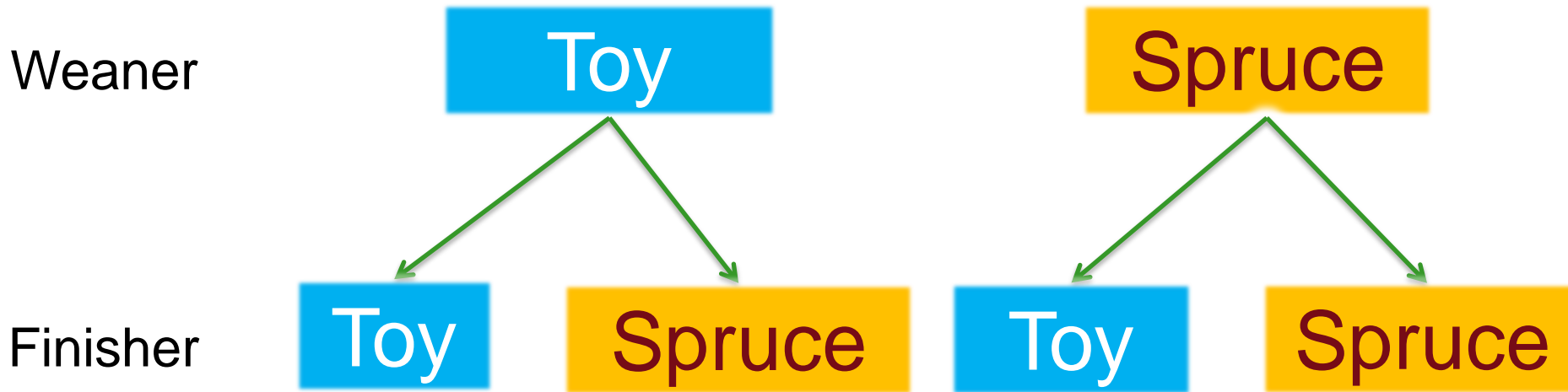


soft or toy



Long tails!

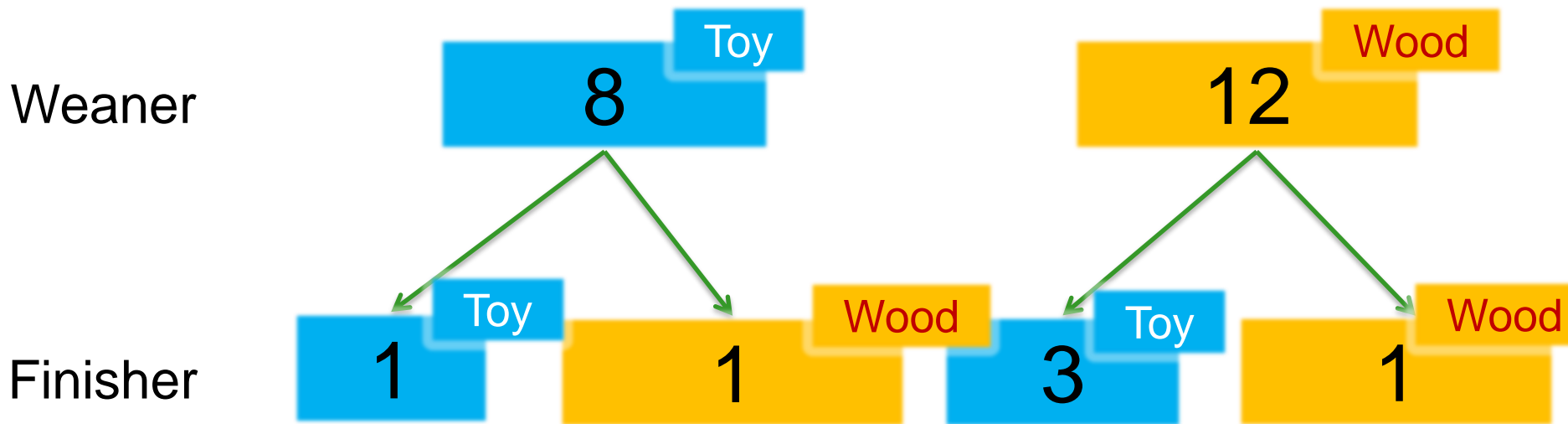
- August – December 2016, 14 pigs/pen (48 pens)



	Control (%CF)	High fibre (%CF)
Weaner	3.23	6.38
Finisher	5.63	10.65

Outbreaks

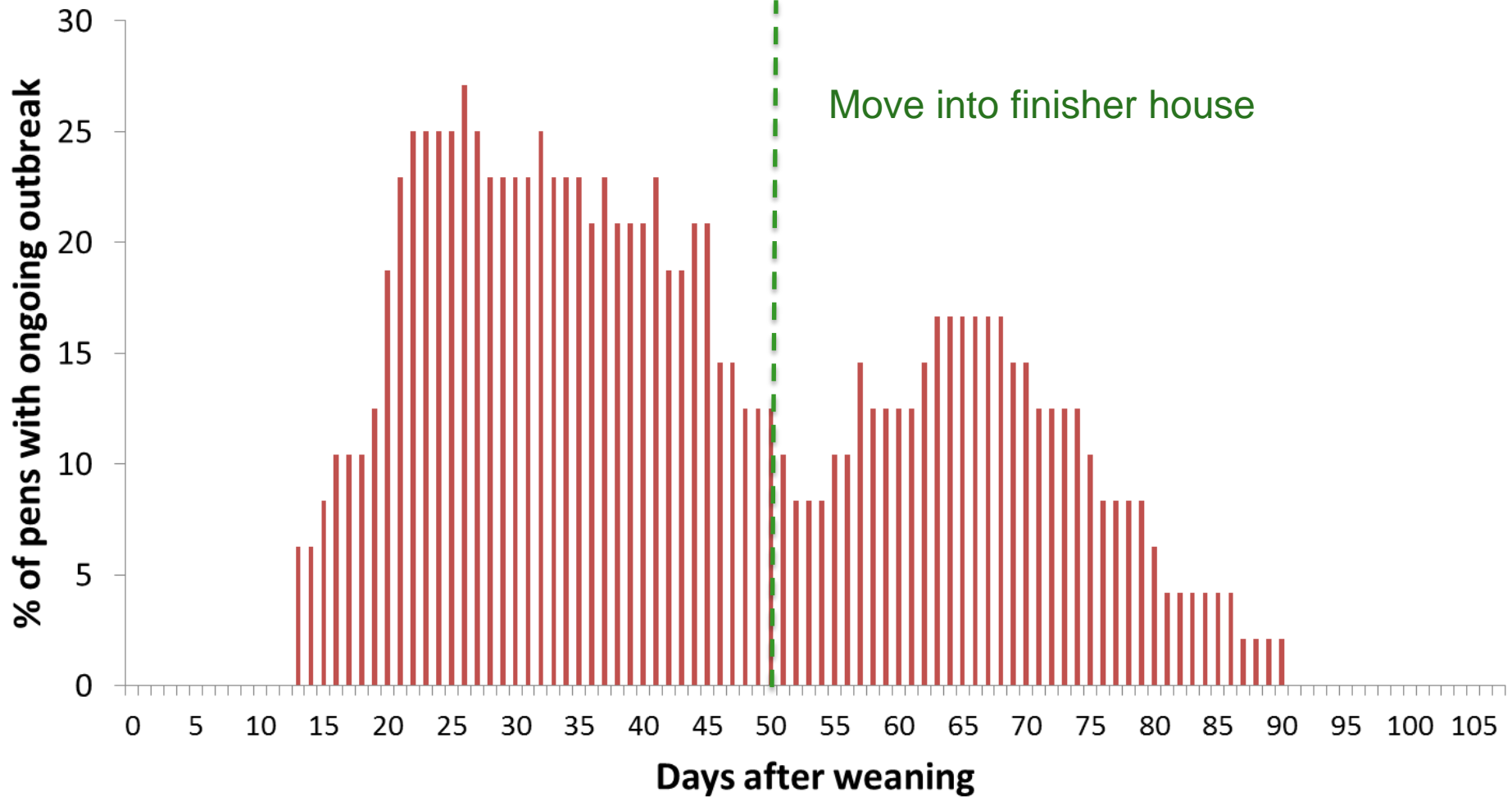
- 20% of the pigs had fresh blood present on the tail



- 26
- Hos

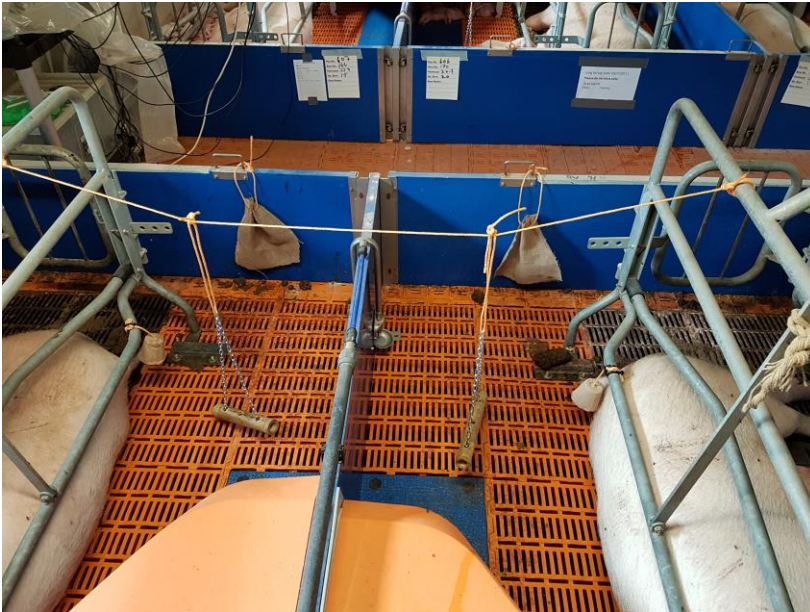
	Control (%CF)	High fibre (%CF)
Weaner	8	12
Finisher	4	2

Outbreaks



Proof of concept study

- 96 pigs (12 pigs/pen), 8 pens
- Farrow to finish



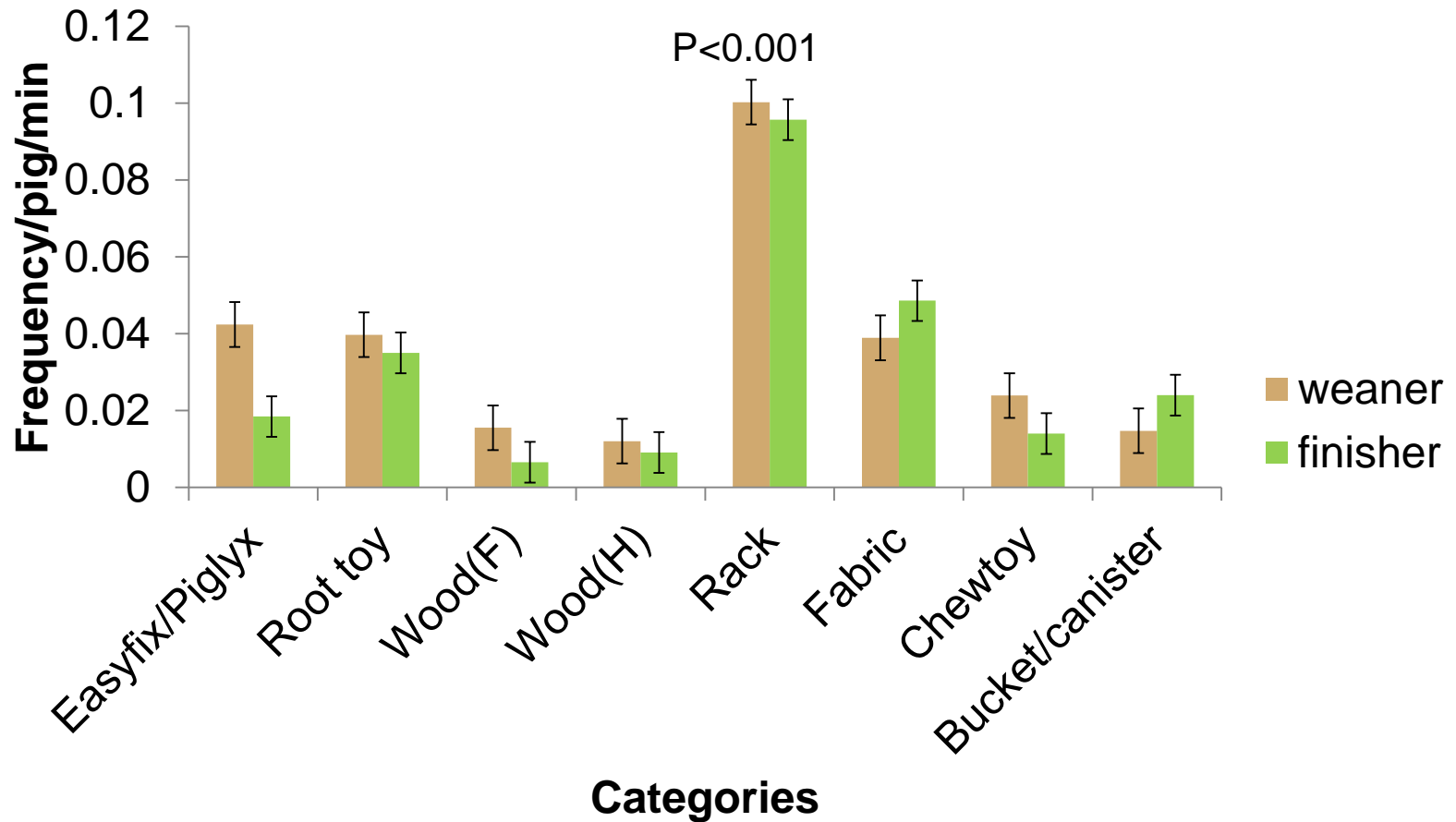
8 Enrichment Categories x 4 items

Category	Properties (Van De Weerd et al., 2003)					
	Rootable	Durable	Edible	Presentation	Texture	Location
1. Easyfix	→			Move	Soft	Floor
2. Root toy – floor	→			Move	Soft	Floor
3. Wood – holder	→			Attach	Hard	Floor
4. Wood – hang	→			Suspend	Hard	Eye
5. Rack	→			Attach	Loose	Eye
6. Fabric	→			Suspend	Soft	Eye
7. Chewtoy – hang	→			Suspend	Soft	Eye
8. Bucket	→			Suspend	Loose	Eye

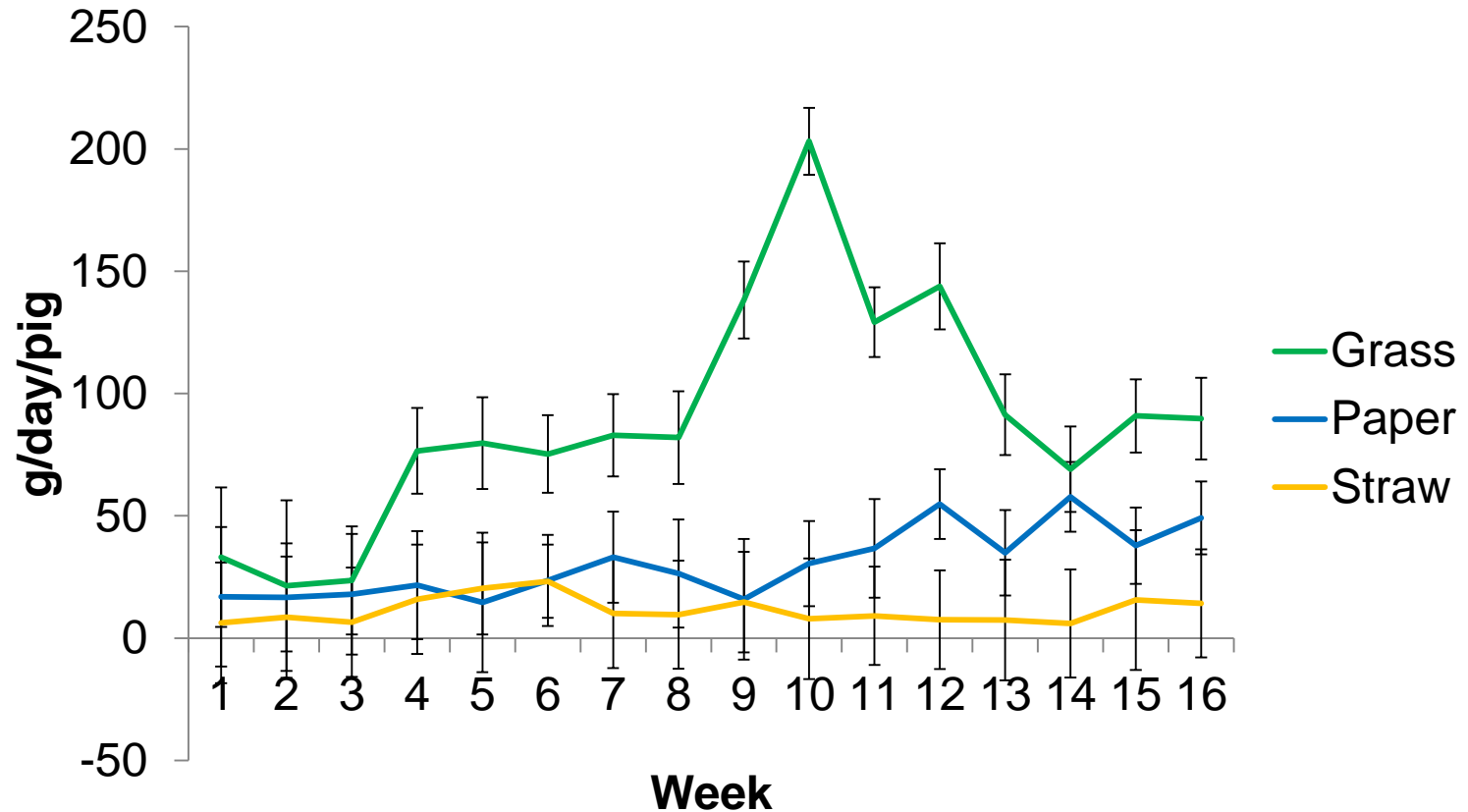




Interaction with different categories by direct observation



Different loose materials



No outbreaks!!



Next step...

- March 2018 – present

Enriched

Optimum

Moderate

Reduced

Control

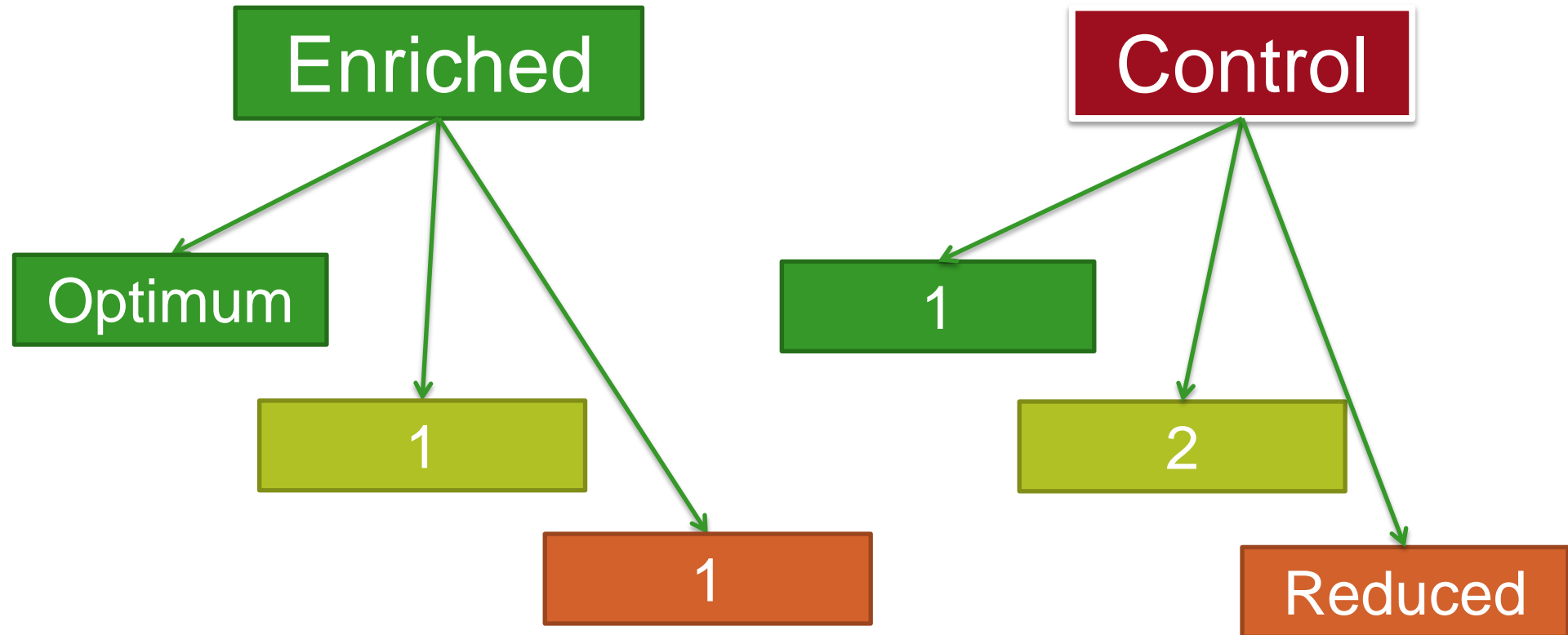
Optimum

Moderate

Reduced

Unfortunately.....

- 7 weeks post weaning for first batch...



Where to next...



We need to be able to rear undocked pigs in Moorepark...

- Maybe the rack is ↑ important than we realised

Finnish experience:

- Reduce no pigs/pen (0.9 m² finishers since 2012)
 - Our pens = 10.02 m²: 12 pigs = 0.84 m²
- Reduce competition at feeder
 - Considered ↑ important factor for Finnish farmers

(Valros et al., 2015)

- Breed?

Open to suggestions!

Take home message!

- Control of tail biting outbreaks in undocked pigs is extremely difficult
- Step-by-step process of determining which methods work
 - Farm specific
- Looking like the ban on docking will be enforced reasonably shortly – post 2019?

Must be addressed before it becomes a non-compliance issue!

Thanks!

- Teagasc advisory, technical and farm staff
- Constance Drique

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(Entail, 2014)

