

## **BEDDING AND "PINE WOOD SHAVINGS" FOR YOUR HORSE, CHICKENS AND POULTRY**

Once upon a time, the only bedtime story for horses was straw. But now bedding types are numerous and diverse with new choices offered as time goes by.

Horse owners will also find a wide variety of factors to influence their choices: cost, individual horse's needs, storage space, work involved, insect control, odor containment, allergies and availability.

**Straw** - Oat or wheat straw is traditionally the most ubiquitous stall lining. Due to its light weight and mat-like quality, urine and manure settle beneath it. Since it's not particularly absorbent, it must be deep to be efficient. If not mucked out daily, large amounts must be removed and replaced to keep the stall pleasant. Straw offers no odor control and does little to discourage flies. Many horses consider it a nice between-meals snack, too. Lots of straw is needed to bed even one stall. Bales can contain dust and mold, aggravating allergies in humans and horses.

**Shavings** - This term is interchangeably used for chips, shavings and sawdust, which is actually incorrect. Species of wood used influences absorption and other positives or negatives. Cedar, for example, can cause allergic skin reactions in some horses and resists decomposition but it also contains tonic acid which may upset some horse's tummies and can make them listless (Lacking energy, enthusiasm or liveliness).

Pine shavings on the other hand smell as fresh as the great outdoors. Pine shavings also outperform less absorbent chips and sawdust!

## **Introduction**

The choice of bedding material is an important aspect of horse-barn management. Bedding can increase dust levels that can pose respiratory problems in both horses and their handlers. In addition, bedding choice will have an impact on the cost of housing horses, the labor involved with stall cleaning, manure storage capacity and, ultimately, nutrient management. The compostability of various materials will affect storage times. Aesthetically, bedding type is important because material that clings to a horse's coat can make a horse appear dirty.

## **What is Pine Wood Shavings?**

In summary, Pine shavings are an all-natural choice used as bedding for horse stables, chicken farms and poultry farms to keep the animals dry and comfortable. The absorbent wood makes clean-up easy and helps to keep them healthier. Multiple grades of ultra premium dustless pine shavings come in small, medium and large flake and needs to be dry.

Wood shavings are a product originated from planed pine lumber. Pine Lumber is a commodity that is traded on markets around the world and its price is based on the economics of supply and demand. If the demand for lumber is low, then the price for pine wood logs will decrease slightly and vice versa.

Wood shavings are created when a lumber mill planes pine wood logs especially manufactured for horses, chickens and poultry.

The availability of wood shavings is determined by two factors: (1) the demand for shavings in the market place and (2) the demands for pine lumber in the market place. As a manufacturer and supplier, it is important that we don't rely on a single source for pine wood logs, as a raw material for shavings.

The market place for shavings overall has a higher demand for shavings during the winter months (when horses are stabled) and a lower demand in the summer months (when horses are pastured), but for the Chicken- and Poultry farms it is imperative to have a constant reliable supply due to life cycles calculated in advance.

## **The Pro's and Con's of Pine Wood Shavings**

### **Pro's of Pine Wood Shavings**

- Pine shavings are readily available from trustable manufacturers and suppliers
- Pine shavings also have a natural aromatic property to them that helps to control odor, the scent masks animal smells and repels skin parasites
- Pine has a natural insecticide property that repels bugs
- Pine shavings are one of the top absorbents, if not the best
- If the horses eats the pine shavings, they wouldn't get sick
- Pine shavings are an economical, low cost, convenient and efficient

## Cons of Pine Wood Shavings

- May stick to towels and fleece if wet
- Not as soft as paper products
- May pose a fire hazard

## Factors Affecting the use of Bedding

### Absorbency

A good bedding material must absorb urine and excess water from the feces to keep the horses dry and comfortable since the average 454-kg (1,000-lb) horse produces 8-10 L of urine per day.

Pine shaving's Water-Holding Capacity is around 1.9 (L/kg) with a Water-Holding Capacity percentage of 186% which makes it a very competitive absorbent compared to wheat straw and peat moss.

### Storage and Labor

The absorbency of the bedding material impacts on the labor associated with stall cleaning. If a horse is particularly "messy" in the stall, and the bedding material has a lower water-holding capacity, the stall will need to be stripped and the bedding material fully replaced each day.

The **ease of separation** of feces from the bedding substrate influences the ease of stall cleaning.

Directly related to the "ease-of-stall-cleaning" is the rate of bedding replacement. This is simply the amount of bedding that must be added each day after cleaning.

It was found that pine shavings required one of the lowest additional amounts to be added and over the course of a year, the combination of manure and bedding produced by one horse amounted to 12.4 cubic meters of manure/horse/year.

Storage capacity and rate of composting is an important consideration with nutrient management. In a study looking at the compostability (how fast a material breaks down) pine shavings remained relatively unchanged.

### **The Horse's Point of View**

Labor considerations and a happy barn staff are essential when considering choice of bedding, but let us not forget the horse. It is, after all, the horses that will be using the bedding, not humans. Horses prefer a pine shavings bedding over a hard surface.

From the point of view of horse cleanliness, the bedding materials do differ. Horse cleanliness may or may not be an important issue depending on the facility and the activities of the horses. If keeping horses clean is a priority at a facility, peat moss would not be the substrate of choice, especially if the horses will be entering their stall wet (e.g., from bathing or being out in the rain). Peat moss will stick to wet horses, where pine shavings most of the time doesn't.

Dustiness of the bedding will impact on the horse. Dusty bedding can contribute to "heaves," a respiratory condition in horses, and it can also negatively affect the health of barn staff.

Dust in hay and straw can be caused by dirt being splashed onto the straw and hay windrows while still in the field; the growth of moulds, either in the windrow or in the mow; and by the presence of fines (chaff and leaf shatter) in the substrate. With shavings, the degree of dustiness depends on the particle size, e.g., sawdust versus planing. **Pine shavings** are created especially by planing pine wood logs where as **sawdust** is composed of fine particles of wood. This material is produced from cutting with a saw, hence its name. ... In actual fact, sawdust is a byproduct from mills manufacturing wood planks. The sawdust as its name suggests contains wooden dust that is incredibly harmful to the respiratory system of any animal, especially horses, chickens and poultry. Sawdust of ANY kind is least preferable because of the dust factor.

### **“Rands” and costing**

Not only is it important to think about the absorbency, labor and horse issues, but the cost of the bedding plays a major role in deciding how suitable it is for your facility. The cheapest bedding material may not be the best solution, and management is a major consideration. Compared to wheat straw, coir and peat moss, shavings is the second least expensive with coir the most expensive and wheat straw the cheapest. Straw is cheap but requires larger additions to the stall daily.

Obviously, there is a lot to take into account when selecting a bedding material for your horses. Consider each aspect and how it will impact on the management of your facility. Select the bedding that fits best with your needs, out of our point of view “Pine Wood Shavings” is an ideal bedding product for your horse!

**So, now that you know more about bedding, give your horse, chicken or poultry a good bedtime story - Sweet dreams!**

*Written by Andries Fourie – “Orbit Wood & Shavings”*

Feel free to contact me with any questions you might have..

Cell +27 82 430 8698

Fax +27 86 657 1909

Email [orbitafrica@gmail.com](mailto:orbitafrica@gmail.com)

Web [www.orbitwoodandshavings.com](http://www.orbitwoodandshavings.com)