

Woodchip example – rough estimate only

While straw is the most used material for animal bedding, woodchip can provide a very successful alternative, Straw prices are unpredictable and in areas of the UK with little arable can be hard to source. Using woodchip can save on the energy and financial cost of shipping straw across the country. A large part of the cost of buying in woodchip however is in the transport, so producing your own can be even more cost effective

Cost of bedding

Bedding material	Estimated cost £/m ³	Yearly cost - at 100 tonnes demand
Straw AHDB August 21	£65	6500
Woodchip - bought in depending on quality	£50	5000
Woodchip home produced	£15	1500

Average yields of woodchip from single species plantations

Estimated yield of woodchip from sample tree species (Woodchip Handbook: Ben Raskin)

Species	Yield (ODT/ha)	Stems per/ha
Willow	4-30	15000
Hazel	2	1500
Poplar	4-20	9000
Alder	16	15000
Eucalyptus	16-22	1500
Softwoods	7-20	2500

The most efficient system of planting for woodchip production is in rows or blocks. Access for large chipping machinery is useful to keep costs low, though smaller chippers can still be used to produce chip in less accessible areas.

Almost any species can be used to produce woodchip bedding, though avoid thorny species or those with potential allelopathic effects. The woodchip can be reused, though needs to be dry so covered storage area is useful. Muck using woodchip absorbs more nutrients than straw and can reduce leaching.

Summary

Producing your own woodchip bedding can offer significant savings to input costs, though some thought needs to go into production and storage, and a shift in some management practices might also be needed.