

Workshop 2: Castration of piglets

The starting point for the workshop was the European Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration, which aims at ending surgical castration of piglets by 2018. Short presentations on the current state of play for available alternatives to surgical castration were given followed by a discussion on the way forward.

From the presentations and the discussion it became clear that the issue of ending surgical castration of piglets is very complex. It was pointed out that production of meat from entire males without detection of boar taint has taken place in some countries for many years, that male pigs in some countries are being vaccinated against boar taint without consumer reaction, and that in other countries meat tested by the human nose detection method is marketed successfully. On the other hand it was also pointed out that there is a need for a new high speed instrumental detection method, that for certain production types surgical castration will need to continue, that with a large production of entire males it may be a problem to find an economically durable use of tainted meat, and that the global market has very different views on alternatives to surgical castration.

Due to a time constraint the discussion mainly focused on the challenges that lie ahead. The following main challenges were identified:

1. Lack of market acceptance of meat from pigs not surgically castrated.
2. Stakeholders representing the pig industry from only a limited number of EU Member States have signed the declaration. More stakeholders including retailers should be engaged.
3. Developing – within the time limit of 2018 - a cost-benefit effective on-line method to detect boar taint based on a globally accepted understanding of the phenomenon of boar taint.
4. Look into use of meat from entire male pigs with or without boar taint
5. Implement and improve ways to reduce levels of boar taint in non-castrated pigs