



Routine tail docking of pigs

It is illegal



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The Danish Animal Welfare Society

- 75.000 members
- Active member of Eurogroup for Animals
- Danish pig production of 29 mio pigs a year:

Pigs are very high on our agenda





The pig tail – an unpopular body part

- 99 % af Danish pigs are tail docked
- EU Commission audit (FVO):
Tail docking is a routine in Denmark
- - *as it is in many other member states*





The pig tail – an unpopular bodypart

- A part of the tail is removed by cutting, clipping, burning or a combination
- Performed within the first week of life (EU law)
- Preventive method to reduce risk of tail biting later in life

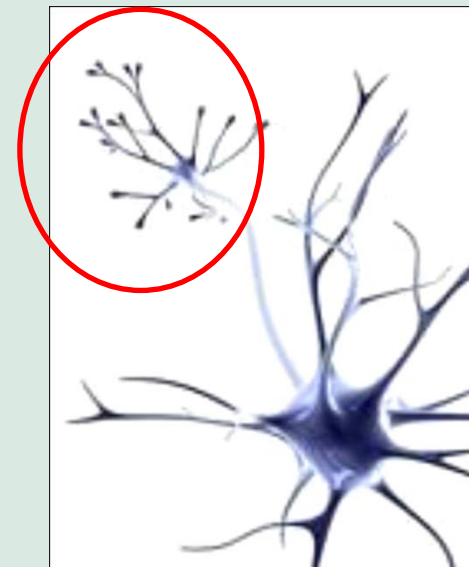




Why tail docking is a problem

Tail docking is painful

- **Acute pain** (e.g. Herskin et al., 2012; EFSA, 2014)
- **Neuromas** (e.g. Herskin et al., 2015; EFSA, 2014)
- The shorter the tail the more pain and neuroma formation



Why tail docking is a problem



- *Routine* closely linked to production in poor environments *as a standard*
- Expert report for EFSA :
An intact curly tail is likely to be the single most important animalbased welfare indicator for weaned, growing and adult pigs (Spoolder et al., 2011)
- Method to avoid dealing with *stress*





- **Tail biting is**

- also welfare problem
- a nonspecific stress reaction
- a multifactorial problem

BUT:

This does not mean that "we don't know anything" and it is best to cut the tail off

Nor does it mean that all factors are equally important or unimportant



The law

Council directive 2008/120/EC laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs ("The Pigs' Directive2)

- Tail docking must not be carried out routinely but only when there is evidence that tail biting has occurred
- Before the farmer is allowed to tail dock the farmer must try to prevent the tail biting through measures that take the environment and stocking densities into account
- Inadequate environmental conditions or management systems must be changed



What is inadequate?

EFSA and expert reports for EFSA:

- Principal factors of tail biting are the absence of straw, the presence of slatted floors and a barren environment...
- The wealth of information on how to reduce the risk of tail biting such as providing suitable enrichment ..(..).. should be used to underpin the importance of preventive measures
- Tail biting may be treated with **enhanced enrichment** (e.g. ample long straw provided fresh twice daily)

Pigs' Directive:

Pigs must 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"



Commission audit (FVO)

- **Inspection visit to Denmark (2010)**

“tail-docking is still systematically performed without a sufficient investigation by the competent authority if efforts have been made by the farmer to improve the environmental conditions or management systems”

- **Three types of violation:**

- Insufficient enrichment on farms with docked pigs
- Pig docked but sold on to other farmer at 7-30 kg, i.e. no documentation of problem (later in life)
- Authorities not reacting to docking in these situations

What to do...

Support productions with intact tails:

- DAWS welfare scheme:
Anbefalet af Dyrenes Beskyttelse (Recommended by DAWS)
Free-range and organic pigs with intact tails (1 % of Danish pigs)



Conventional pig production (99 % of Danish pigs):

- 15 years of negotiations (three national working groups)
- Formal complaints to
2011: Danish Ministry of Agriculture
2011: Danish Ministry of Justice
2012: EU Commission



The complaint

1) Tail docking is carried out routinely and therefore the current practice is illegal

- All pigs in the conventional pig production are tail docked
- The demand in the law that there is a tail biting problem on the farm is disregarded
- The demand in the law that attempts to solve the problem through changes to the environment and management before tail docking is disregarded
- About half the Danish pigs are sold on at 30 kg, most of them to unknown buyers. These pigs are all preventively tail docked – on a routine basis – even though the sow keeper cannot know if there is a tail biting problem on the farms that the pigs are going to, and cannot know if attempts have been made to correct the problem.

2) The Danish authorities do not control the law adequately in that they never – or only in extremely few cases - have found tail docking to be a routine in a Danish pig facilities

The complaint

Reply from the Commission:

Denmark is non-compliant, but Commission will not start infringement procedures
Education

- E-learning tools
- Guidelines covering tail-docking and enrichment material
- Training official veterinarians

Formal petition to PETI Committee in the EU parliament (2012 - ongoing)

Three meetings with presentation of our petition (2013-2015)

- Very strong support for complaint
- Urges infringement procedure
- Emphasis on market distortion
- Requests report from EU Parliament's DG for Internal Policies



DG for internal policies report:

- 17 member states noncompliant (routine tail docking)
- 5 member states lack information
- 6 member states compliant
 - ✓ Sweden, Finland, UK, Cyprus, Lithuania, Slovakia
- Distortion of the internal market
- Guidelines still not adopted – negotiations broken down
- Infringement procedures

Overall, strong support to our complaint and the position of PETI



Current status

PETI has requested from the EU-Commission

- Detailed written reaction to report from DG Internal Policies
- Explanation of why never any guidelines and no infringement proceedings

PETI has requested opinions on the report from

- The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
- The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

PETI is keeping the petition/complaint open

- Will follow up on the information
- Potentially send a delegation to number of member states to investigate the implementation of the pigs directive





The ban on routine tail docking has been in force for more than 20 years



The Pigs' Directive has been in force for more than 10 years





We **must** move towards a European pig production where pigs – on a routine basis – keep their tails and live in environments where this is a sustainable solution



Thank you for your attention

