

Output from workshop 3 – *Tail biting and tail docking of piglets*

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss tail biting and the current knowledge of this multifactorial abnormal behavior and how to prevent it, e.g., by tail docking the piglets.

Obviously, tail biting causes a painful condition for the bitten pigs. But the issue with tail docking is that the procedure in itself is also painful for the pigs. At the same time, tail docking does not remove the underlying cause of tail biting such as frustration due to, e.g., lack of enrichment material or too little space.

According to FVO audits, piglets in many member states are tail-docked within the first 4 days of life - even though routine tail docking has been banned in the EU for many years. One of the reasons is that keeping pigs with intact tails is a challenge for the pig farmers.

The speakers in this workshop and the following fruitful discussions all brought new and valuable knowledge with them, highlighting the challenges and some possible ways forward for reducing the experienced need for tail docking.

Some of the main challenges and focus points identified at the workshop included:

- Clarifying best practice to prevent outbreaks (e.g., optimizing the use of occupational material, feeding and other management strategies).
- Clarifying best practice to stop ongoing outbreaks and minimize negative consequences for the bitten pigs.
- Focusing on tail biting in farms that buy younger pigs for fattening.

Suggested solutions and ways forward for teaching animal welfare included:

- Stopping tail docking immediately (e.g., a first step could be to begin to dock less and less of the tail), encouraging the farmer to think “out of the box”.
- Sharing information with farmers regarding manipulative material.
- Developing management systems that can cope with undocked pigs.
- Exchanging different kind of knowledge between countries and passing it on to the farmer.

The workshop also had a very interesting poll showing that 95 % of the participants believe that it is realistic to stop tail docking either immediately or within a 10 years period.