

## Tail docking yes/no



### Docking procedure

- Tail docking is a procedure carried out on piglets to reduce the risk of being tail bitten later in life; the shorter the remaining tail, the lower the risk of subsequent tail injury from biting.
- Docking, even in very young piglets, causes acute pain and subsequent inflammation.
- ONLY after having made appropriate management changes, short-term tail docking is allowed if tail biting still continues.

### Legal requirements



Council Directive **2008/120/EC** states: "Neither tail-docking nor reduction of corner teeth must be carried out routinely but only where there is evidence that injuries to sows' teats or to other pigs' ears or tails have occurred. Before carrying out these procedures, other measures shall be taken to prevent tail biting and other vices, taking into account environment and stocking densities. For this reason inadequate environmental conditions or management systems must be changed." {Annex I, Chapter I, point 8}

A main requirement for the farmer is to keep written evidence of tail biting if he wants to justify tail docking.

**Council Directive 98/58/EC:** "All animals kept in husbandry systems in which their welfare depends on frequent human attention shall be inspected at least once a day." {2. Annex};

"The owner or keeper of the animals shall maintain a record of any medicinal treatment given and of the number of mortalities found to each inspection." {5. Annex}

*Note: There might be stricter national legislation in place.*

### Docked: yes/no

- The farmer informs inspector about docking management.
- The official inspector verifies records of the farmer by comparing written documentation with tail status of the pigs.
- It can be difficult to distinguish between docked or bitten tails. In both cases, the skin at the end of the tail is scarred, has an abnormal end form or is too thick to be considered normal. However, when all tails are shortened and quite similar in length, this indicates that they are docked.

### RISK ASSESSMENT

If tails are docked inspector verifies records of the farmer by comparing written documentation of risk assessment and the (appropriate) management changes taken by the farmer:

- ✓ Environmental enrichment
- ✓ Thermal comfort and air quality
- ✓ Health status
- ✓ Competition for resources
- ✓ Diet
- ✓ Pen structure and cleanliness



#### Action plans: what happens in practice:

Several MS have set the intervention level for docked pigs on 2% injured tails. Above 2% they consider that tail docking may be permitted, IF improvement measures have been tried but failed AND IF new improvement measures are implemented. New measures must be reviewed after every batch to check if they address the problem. This involves a new risk assessment. Below 2% tail injuries farmers are expected not to dock.



### No risk to welfare: Intact tails

**No sign of damage:**  
it is not wounded nor  
shortened. The tail is  
curled and the tail  
tip is flat and has  
bristles



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### High risk to welfare: Shortened tails

**The skin at the end  
of the tail is scarred,  
has an abnormal end  
form or is too thick  
to be considered  
normal**



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suggestions regarding this factsheet  
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