

Tail biting: Action Plans



Summary & discussion Hans Spoolder

**Annual meeting Competent Authorities
Teams 4+5 October 2021**



The issues we discussed

1. How do member states implement on farm 'risk assessment' required by the Action Plans?
2. What is happening with the outcomes of the risk assessment?
3. How can the Action Plans stimulate pig farmers in a Member State to "grow the tails back on"?

1. Risk assessment

COM REC EU 336/2016 recommends in Art 2A-2:
“MS to ensure farmers carry out risk assessment”.

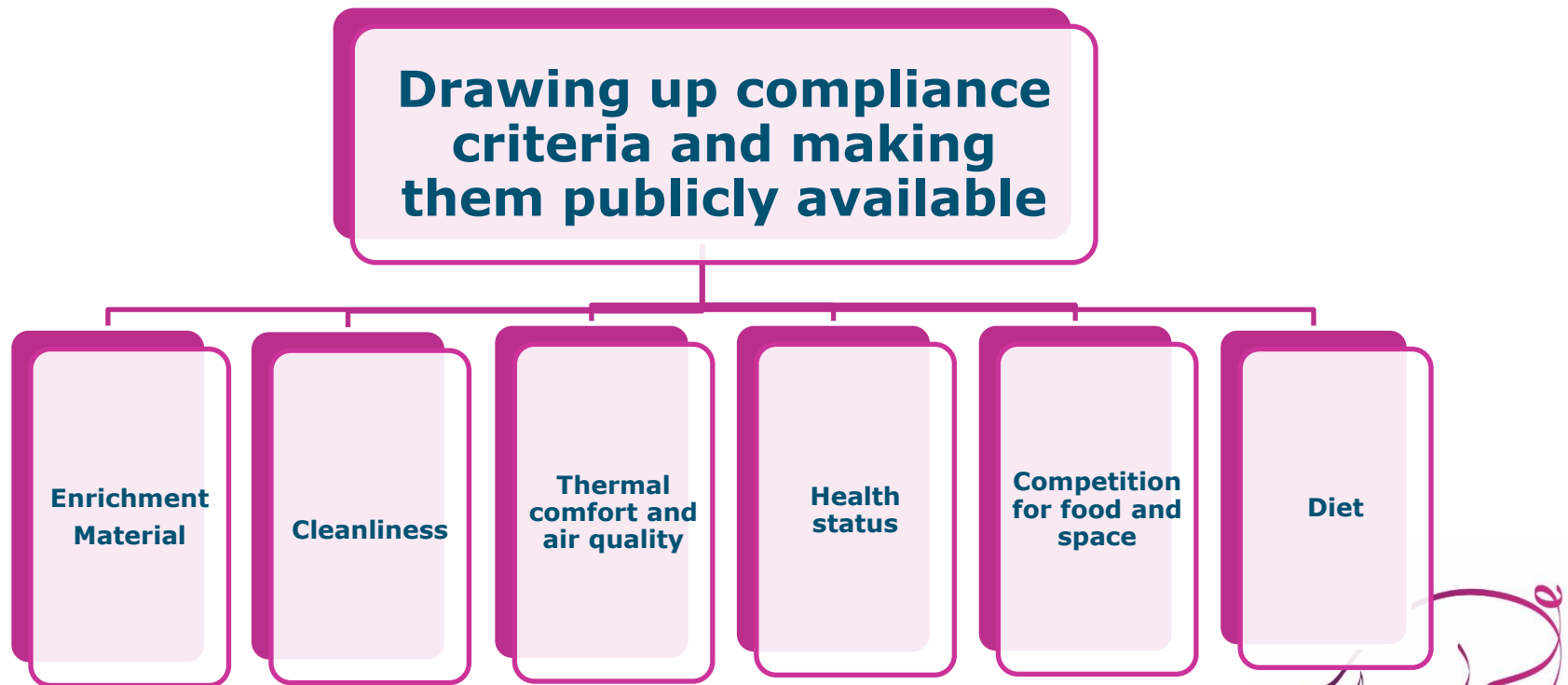
Member States should ensure that farmers carry out a risk assessment of the incidence of tail-biting based on animal and non-animal based indicators

- Not legally binding, but carry “legal weight”
- Recommendation was agreed by MS and pig sector



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1. Risk assessment



1. Risk assessment: how to do it?

- Agree a standard risk assessment protocol
- Some MS do this together with their pig industry
- Set up an R&D project to identify individual elements
- Keep it simple.... 'yes – no' questions are preferred
- Use a 'decision tree' structure
- Publish the protocol so everyone is informed

1. Risk assessment: how to do it?

- Some MS ask **farmers** to run the Risk Assessment themselves, and report on it during CA inspection visits
- Some ask trained **veterinarians** to do the risk assessment together with the farmers, their efforts are checked by the CA
- One MS recruits '**coaches**' to help farmers write their action plan (veterinary or other advisors), the results are checked by the CA

1. Risk assessment: how to do it?

- Visit the farms **regularly** to check the implementation of actions. Every six months (?)
- But... visiting all farms not feasible in some countries!
- A dedicated team of inspectors focussing on one issue?
- Checking one important risk factor only (e.g. enrichment!) and temporarily ignoring the rest, is not allowed by the EU Commission – you have to check all 6 factors





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2. What to do with the outcomes?

2. What to do with the outcomes?



- There are too many risks of tail biting
 - You can't stop docking yet...
- (of course this outcome is never OK!!)

But (just out of interest!), “What tail docking threshold should apply?”

- 2% damaged tails at the abattoir was suggested as an average.
 - This is in docked pigs (presumably)
 - Please note that abattoir data will underestimate the true prevalence
 - -> it's better to check on farm if you can.
- The pig sub-group of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare's did not conclude on a threshold!

2. What to do with the outcomes?



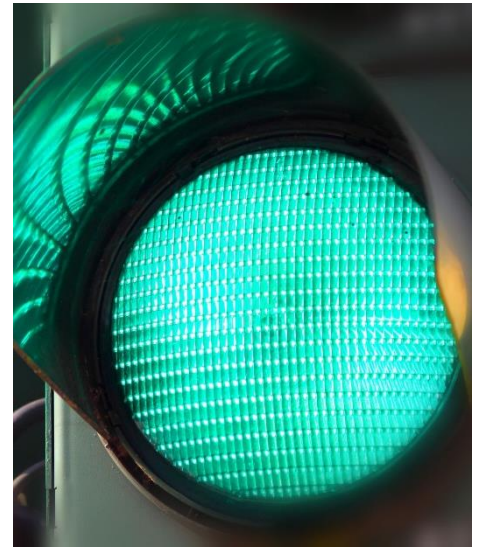
- There are too many risks of tail biting
- You can't stop docking yet...
(of course this outcome is never OK!!)
- Keep trying to reduce the risks!
- Regular return visits
- Re-assess what happens
- Plan-do-check-act

2. What to do with the outcomes?

- The risk assessment says: 'GO!!'

(Congratulations!!)

- Take it easy... A few pens at a time
- Farmer sees how it goes, and builds confidence
- Evaluate progress regularly



2. What to do with the outcomes?

- No-one seems to have succeeded yet.....

(.... even though brave attempts
were made)



3. How to grow the tails back on?

- Farmers are well informed about the risk factors
- They know what to do.... but can't seem to make it work on their farm!
- They fear tail biting



3. How to grow the tails back on?

- But still:
 - The Finns have stopped docking
 - Dutch farmers sell entire tail pigs to Sweden
 - MS subsidising farmers to keep tails on?
- So: does extra money help?

3. How to grow the tails back on?

- **Quality assurance** schemes (industry drivers, supermarkets)
- Subsidies through the **reformed CAP**?
- European Innovation Partnership (**EIP**)
- Get rid of **negative financial incentives** (e.g. “no one wants my long tailed weaners”)
- What can be done at the **planning stage** of new farms?



3. How to grow the tails back on?



- Care & attention!
- Regular monitoring....

Above all:

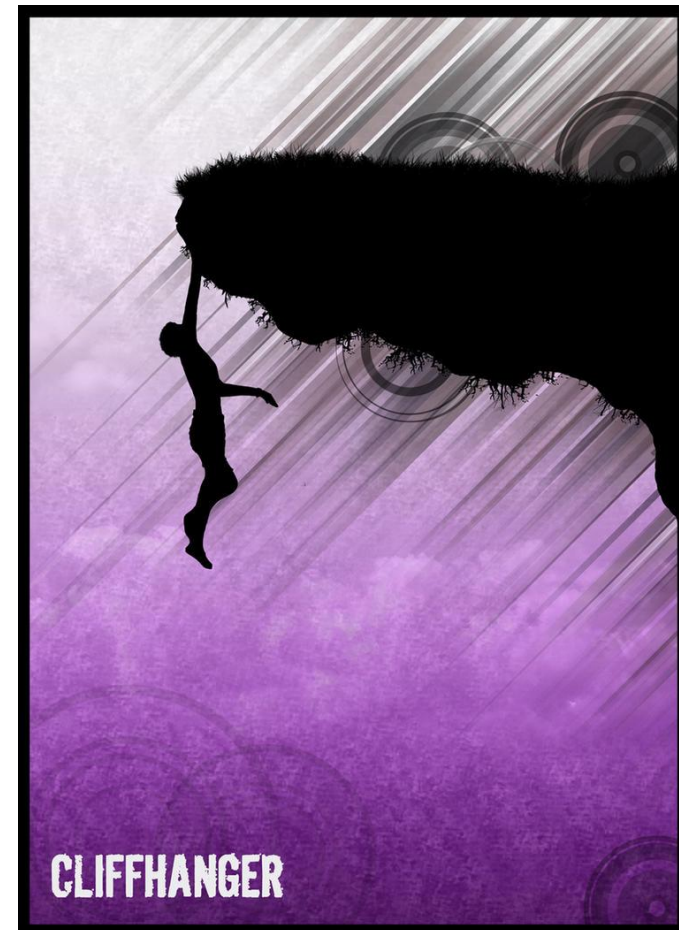
- The **attitude** towards docking is crucial, if you want to make long tails a success

3. How to grow the tails back on?

- Jan's training materials on making a change
- Motivate farmers, and work with them to resolve the issues
- Start with farmers that are willing & able: "seeing is believing"

My own amateur psychology.....:

EURCAW can help YOU with the tools to convince others that it's possible!





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