Tail docking – the long and short of it

Database: CAB Abstracts <2000 to 2014 Week 11>
Search Strategy:
1 (tail and dock*).mp. [mp=abstract, title, original title, broad terms, heading words]
2 (humane or ethic* or welfare* or legislat* or guide* or code or legal*).mp. [mp=abstract, title, original title, broad terms, heading words]
3 1 and 2

1
Accession Number
20143035112
Author
Fadeyemi, A. J.
Title
Tail docking in dogs: evaluation of current practices and ethical aspects in southwest Nigeria.
Source
Publisher
Academic Journals
Location of Publisher
Nairobi
Country of Publication
Kenya
Abstract
This study evaluated the current practices of tail docking in dogs routinely performed in southwest Nigeria, as well as their ethical issues. The data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire provided to breeders/owners besides an audit of retrospective case records. The results indicated that tail docking was performed and embraced by all practices and breeders/owners surveyed, with higher frequency of Rottweiler (76.7%) in comparison to PitBull (56.0%) and Boerboel (51.2%) breeds. Seventy four percent of breeders docked for customary/traditional reason while others did so for reasons which included improved appearance (53.6%), convenience and pleasure (46.4%), better hygiene (28.0%), ease of mating (14.2%), enhanced aggressiveness (7.1%) and prevention of injuries (7.1%). Most practices (97.4%) docked for non-therapeutic purposes. Sixty five percent of respondents docked at 2 to 3 weeks of age while others did at less than 2 weeks (11.6%) and above 3 weeks (23.3%), respectively. Infection/necrosis (37.2%) and self-mutilation (20.9%) were the most observed post-operative complications by respondents. Most practices (72.0%) performed tail docking without anaesthesia while 60.5% of practices never gave post-operative analgesic.
Majority of respondents (72.0%) oppose abrogation of docking for non-therapeutic reasons. Primary legislation prohibiting docking of dogs’ tails except for medical or surgical reasons is recommended.
Publication Type
Journal article.

2
Accession Number
20133335954
Author
Scollo, A.; Martino, G. di; Bonfanti, L.; Stefani, A. L.; Schiavon, E.; Marangon, S.; Gottardo, F.
Title
Tail docking and the rearing of heavy pigs: the role played by gender and the presence of straw in the control of tail biting. Blood parameters, behaviour and skin lesions.
Source
Research in Veterinary Science; 2013. 95(2):825-830. 34 ref.

Publisher
Elsevier Ltd
Location of Publisher
Oxford
Country of Publication
UK

Abstract
This study evaluated whether the specific heavy pig rearing context allowed the fattening of undocked pigs without an outbreak of tail biting. At the same time, gender and straw availability (small amounts) were considered to understand their possible interactions with tail presence in the display of tail biting. A 2x2x2 factorial design was adopted to test the effects of these factors on blood parameters, behaviour and tail/ear lesions. Few interactions among factors were detected. Undocked pigs showed lower cortisol (P<0.02), lying behaviour (P<0.001), and higher risk of tail/ear biting (weeks 3 and 9), but lower risk of tail lesions (week 14). Straw increased the motivation for exploring (P<0.001), reduced serum haptoglobin (P<0.001) and the risk for tail biting (weeks 3, 9, 18) and ear biting (weeks 3, 9). Results highlight the importance of straw as an environmental enrichment and seem to indicate that fattening undocked heavy pigs is possible.

Publication Type
Journal article.

Accession Number
20133318548
Author
Blaha, T.
Title
Status of the investigation to waive the massive tail docking routine in pigs. [German]
Source
Praktische Tierarzt; 2013. 94(9):837-839.
Publisher
Schlutersche Verlagsgesellschaft GmbH & Co. KG
Location of Publisher
Hannover
Country of Publication
Germany
Abstract
This article discusses the advantages, disadvantages, regulations, welfare issues and current views on tail docking in piglets and fattening pigs.
Publication Type
Journal article.

Accession Number
20133318508
Author
Beek, V. ter
Title
A revolution in thinking about pig tails.
Source
Publisher
Reed Business
Location of Publisher
Doetinchem
Country of Publication

Although tail docking in female lambs is still performed in Belgian field conditions, the effectiveness of docking and hence the necessity of that procedure are questioned. Tail docking in lambs is a cosmetic treatment rather than a treatment to prevent myiasis. In order to limit myiasis in sheep, the focus must be adjusted. The aim of this article is to discuss tail docking in lambs and to focus on alternatives, which may or may not be immediately implementable. In this view, veterinarians can advise farmers to take more effective management measures to reduce myiasis. Frequent monitoring of the animals, limiting the contamination of the hindquarters, the preventive use of antiparasitic products, shear management and fly traps are important tools for this purpose.

Tail docking is a common practice in sheep extensive farming. This review gives an overview on the main aspects of sheep tail docking, describing different commonly used techniques. Physiological and behavioral indicators useful to evaluate the presence of pain are also described, as well as the use of anesthetic and analgesic drugs. Directive 1998/58 CE on farm animal welfare does not provide for specific rules on tail docking, delegating relevant national provisions to the stakeholders. Dispositions are present at National level, although some countries (including Italy) do not have a specific law to safeguard ovine welfare during tail docking procedures. This procedure is essential in order to prevent...
myiasis, however, it is often performed paying no attention on animal welfare. Painful practices are used by non-trained personnel and anesthetics or analgesics are uncommon in this procedure. As emerged analyzing behavioral and hormonal parameters (e.g. cortisol level), pain perceived by ovine differs in relation to the type of practice applied. Necrosis inducted by a prolonged application of a rubber ring is the most commonly used technique, although this has a considerable impact on welfare. The mechanical pressure using the Burdizzo clamp, alone or combined to the rubber ring, resulted less painful that the use of the rubber ring alone. Although economically not advantageous, local anesthesia would be always advisable, especially in animals older than a week. In any case, in order to avoid repercussion on colostrum assumption, this technique should never be performed on lambs within the first 24 hours of live. From this review it is evident that the practice of tail docking is still controversial with regard to its effects on the welfare of sheep, although its effectiveness in the prevention of myiasis seems clear. Alternative strategies for myiasis control (e.g. integrated flies population management, animal immunization, sensible areas shearing) should be systematically used, and tail docking should be carried out only in case of real necessity.

Publication Type
Journal article.

<7>
Accession Number
20133208724
Author
Borell, E. von
Title
Pain in pigs - assessment, prevention and mitigation. (Schwerpunkt: Schmerz [Special issue: pain]) [German]
Source
Publisher
Terra-Verlag GmbH
Location of Publisher
Konstanz
Country of Publication
Germany
Abstract
The following review emphasizes the assessment, prevention and mitigation of pain in pigs as a consequence of pathological conditions deriving from housing design and management deficiencies, abnormal behaviour as well as routine practices causing pain such as castration, teeth grinding and tail docking. Pigs indicate states of pain and stress through alterations in behaviour, body postures and specific call characteristics emitted during painful practices. Assessment of pain should be based on multiple behavioural criteria in combination with physiological indicators of stress in highly controlled studies. Painful on farm routine practices should be generally avoided in future or replaced by non-invasive procedures. Routine on farm pain treatment and anaesthesia does not seem to be effective and practical as a long term solution.
Publication Type
Journal article.

<8>
Accession Number
20133192148
Author
Widowski, T.
Title
Causes and prevention of tail biting in growing pigs: a review of recent research.
Source
One of the largest animal welfare problems in modern pig production is tail biting. This abnormal behaviour compromises the well-being of the animals, can seriously impair animal health and can cause considerable economic losses. Tail biting has a multifactorial origin and occurs mainly in fattening pigs. High stocking densities, poor environment and bad air quality are seen as important factors. However, it is presumed that a plurality of internal and external motivators in intensive pig production can trigger this behaviour which is not reported in sounders of wild boars. The aim of this review is to summarize the causes and the effects of tail biting in pigs and present management strategies that are likely to reduce its incidence. In particular, management strategies by applying Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) technologies to monitor and control the behaviour of the pigs may be suitable to detect the outbreaks of tail biting at an early stage so that counter measures can be taken in time.

Castration and tail docking in lambs: moving away from tradition.

Castration and tail docking in lambs: moving away from tradition.
This article discusses the various traditional methods of castration and tail docking in lambs, along with their associated levels of pain and infection risk. Alternatives to a more humane castration and tail docking procedures are suggested, and a least painful procedure should be used with suitable anaesthetics and analgesics in managing pain and promoting animal welfare.
Country of Publication
Denmark

Abstract
Tail docking of dogs is not permitted in Denmark except in five exempt breeds: wire-haired and short-haired pointers, Brittany spaniel, Viszla and Weimaraner. This discussion, based on an extensive literature review of the subject, considers the pain and stress associated with surgery (with and without anaesthesia), the possible problem of phantom pain after amputation, and the loss of ability to communicate with the tail. These issues are set against the problems associated with tail damage sustained during hunting. It is concluded that there is currently insufficient knowledge of the issues involved, and that further work should be carried out, especially on chronic pain.

Publication Type
Journal article.

<13>
Accession Number
20123278826
Author
Keeling, L. J.; Wallenbeck, A.; Larsen, A.; Holmgren, N.
Title
Scoring tail damage in pigs: an evaluation based on recordings at Swedish slaughterhouses.
Source
Publisher
BioMed Central Ltd
Location of Publisher
London
Country of Publication
UK

Abstract
Background: There is increasing interest in recording tail damage in pigs at slaughter to identify problem farms for advisory purposes, but also for benchmarking within and between countries as part of systematic monitoring of animal welfare. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions when comparing prevalence's between studies and countries partly due to differences in management (e.g. differences in tail docking and enrichment routines) and partly due to differences in the definition of tail damage.

Methods: Tail damage and tail length was recorded for 15,068 pigs slaughtered during three and four consecutive days at two slaughterhouses in Sweden. Tail damage was visually scored according to a 6-point scale and tail length was both visually scored according to a 5-point scale and recorded as tail length in centimetres for pigs with injured or shortened tails. Results: The total prevalence of injury or shortening of the tail was 7.0% and 7.2% in slaughterhouse A and B, respectively. When only considering pigs with half or less of the tail left, these percentages were 1.5% and 1.9%, which is in line with the prevalence estimated from the routine recordings at slaughter in Sweden. A higher percentage of males had injured and/or shortened tails, and males had more severely bitten tails than females. Conclusions: While the current method to record tail damage in Sweden was found to be reliable as a method to identify problem farms, it clearly underestimates the actual prevalence of tail damage. For monitoring and benchmarking purposes, both in Sweden and internationally, we propose that a three graded scale including both old and new tail damage would be more appropriate. The scale consists of one class for no tail damage, one for mild tail damage (injured or shortened tail with more than half of the tail remaining) and one for severe tail damage (half or less of the tail remaining).

Publication Type
Journal article.

<14>
Accession Number
20123243504
Author
Minimising pain in farm animals: the 3S approach - `Suppress, Substitute, Soothe'.

Recently, the French National Institute for Agricultural Research appointed an expert committee to review the issue of pain in food-producing farm animals. To minimise pain, the authors developed a `3S' approach accounting for 'Suppress, Substitute and Soothe' by analogy with the '3Rs' approach of 'Reduction, Refinement and Replacement' applied in the context of animal experimentation. Thus, when addressing the matter of pain, the following steps and solutions could be assessed, in the light of their feasibility (technical constraints, logistics and regulations), acceptability (societal and financial aspects) and availability. The first solution is to suppress any source of pain that brings no obvious advantage to the animals or the producers, as well as sources of pain for which potential benefits are largely exceeded by the negative effects. For instance, tail docking of cattle has recently been eliminated. Genetic selection on the basis of resistance criteria (as e.g. for lameness in cattle and poultry) or reduction of undesirable traits (e.g. boar taint in pigs) may also reduce painful conditions or procedures. The second solution is to substitute a technique causing pain by another less-painful method. For example, if dehorning cattle is unavoidable, it is preferable to perform it at a very young age, cauterising the horn bud. Animal management and constraint systems should be designed to reduce the risk for injury and bruising. Lastly, in situations where pain is known to be present, because of animal management procedures such as dehorning or castration, or because of pathology, for example lameness, systemic or local pharmacological treatments should be used to soothe pain. These treatments should take into account the duration of pain, which, in the case of some management procedures or diseases, may persist for longer periods. The administration of pain medication may require the intervention of veterinarians, but exemptions exist where breeders are allowed to use local anaesthesia (e.g. castration and dehorning in Switzerland). Extension of such exemptions, national or European legislation on pain management, or the introduction of animal welfare codes by retailers into their meat products may help further developments. In addition, veterinarians and farmers should be given the necessary tools and information to take into account animal pain in their management decisions.
scientists, and representatives of industry, tail docking of cows in the dairy industry - the partial
amputation of up to two-thirds of the tail, typically performed without anesthetic - is still permitted in
most of the United States. Scientific studies have shown the mutilation to cause serious welfare
problems for animals, including distress, pain, and increased fly attacks.

Publication Type
Miscellaneous.

<16>
Accession Number
20123145477
Author
Beirendonck, S. van; Driessen, B.; Verbeke, G.; Permentier, L.; Perre, V. van de; Geers, R.
Title
Improving survival, growth rate, and animal welfare in piglets by avoiding teeth shortening and tail
docking.
Source
Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research; 2012. 7(2):88-93. 31 ref.
Publisher
Elsevier
Location of Publisher
New York
Country of Publication
USA
Abstract
Piglets are subjected to several painful procedures during their first week of life, including ear
tagging, teeth clipping or grinding (although routinely prohibited in Europe), tail docking (although
routinely prohibited in Europe), needle injections (vaccination and iron injection), and castration might
be performed for male piglets. All these management practices cause pain and stress to the newborn
piglets. The hypothesis of this experiment was that reducing painful interventions during the first week
of life results in better zootechnical performance of the piglets, reduced piglet mortality, and that the
overall welfare is improved. To investigate this, the 4 lightest piglets of the experimental group (EE)
were not subjected to tail docking and teeth clipping or grinding. The 4 lightest piglets of the control
group (CL) and the other piglets of the experimental group (EC) and the control group (CC) received
treatments as the common practice. There were differences in behavior, but there were no differences
regarding weight at weaning between CL and EE. However, mortality rate was higher in the lightest
piglets, that is, CL (34.1%) and EE (23.0%), whereas mortality rate in the other piglets was much
lower (9.0% for CC and 9.3% for EC). This information can be useful for a veterinarian to advise
farmers on whether painful interventions should be performed.

Publication Type
Journal article.

<17>
Accession Number
20123070800
Author
Edwards, S.
Title
What do we know about tail biting today?
Source
Pig Journal; 2011. 66:81-86. 39 ref.
Publisher
Pig Veterinary Society
Location of Publisher
Thirsk
Country of Publication
UK

Abstract
This article discusses the prevalence, risk factors, breed predisposition, genetic factors, causes, prevention and managing tail biting in pigs; along with the future of tail docking in relation to animal welfare.

Publication Type
Journal article
Conference paper.

<18>
Accession Number
2011362906

Author
Weary, D. M.; Schuppli, C. A.; Keyserlingk, M. A. G. von

Title
Tail docking dairy cattle: responses from an online engagement.

Source

Publisher
American Society of Animal Science

Location of Publisher
Savoy

Country of Publication
USA

Abstract
Tail docking remains a common practice on dairy farms in the United States. This paper describes the results of an online engagement designed to create discussion on tail docking, to document the reasons participants put forward for and against the practice, and to compare these reasons with the literature available on this topic. A total of 178 people responded; 30% were producers, 23% were veterinarians, 25% had no experience with the dairy industry, and 22% included a mixture of teachers, students, and industry professionals. Approximately 79% of participants were opposed to docking. Responses varied with participant demographics (e.g., females were more likely than males to oppose docking), but in every demographic subgroup (e.g., by sex, age, country of origin, and dairy production experience), the majority of respondents were opposed to tail docking. Common reasons for opposition to docking included the lack of scientific evidence that docking improves cleanliness or udder health, that docking is painful for cows, that docking is unnatural, and that tails are important for controlling flies. Some respondents in favor of docking cited cow cleanliness as an issue, despite the scientific evidence showing no positive effect of docking on cow cleanliness or udder health. Additional reasons included protecting producer safety. These results illustrate the range of reasons that are cited for supporting and opposing tail docking. This approach can be used to better target outreach efforts (e.g., improving farmer education on the lack of positive effects of docking on cleanliness and udder health while addressing concerns about producer safety). More generally, this type of online discussion provides a safe and productive format for discussions about contentious issues in the dairy industry and provides a mechanism for producers, industry professionals, and the public to share perspectives on these topics.

Publication Type
Journal article.

<19>
Accession Number
20113278801

Author
Mullan, S.; Edwards, S. A.; Butterworth, A.; Whay, H. R.; Main, D. C. J.

Title
A pilot investigation of possible positive system descriptors in finishing pigs.
In this study, pig producers were identified whose practices exceeded the basic legal requirements and government recommendations for pig welfare. This novel approach was part of a larger project investigating the feasibility and benefits of the inclusion of some animal-based welfare outcome measures into the main UK pig farm assurance schemes. A set of pig-keeping-system descriptor scores were devised through consultation with stakeholders, whereby a finishing pig-farm would be classified on a scale of 1 (legislation compliance) to 5 (highest level of welfare provision) for six different elements of pig husbandry which can influence pig welfare (environmental enrichment, foraging behaviour, thermal comfort, physical comfort, tail docking and floor space provision). Animal-based observations were used to assess the welfare of a sample of between 67 and 220 pigs on 15 UK finishing pig farms, which were also classified according to the system descriptors. Scores achieved when assessing the environmental enrichment and physical comfort elements were significantly positively correlated with a qualitative assessment of good mood of the pigs and a measure of their oral manipulation and significantly negatively correlated with the prevalence of tail lesions and swollen bursae. However, there were wide variations in the prevalence of animal-based welfare outcome measures between farms with the same system descriptor score. These system descriptors are therefore not sufficient to be used alone to provide assurances on welfare. It is suggested that a combined approach of system descriptors and animal-based welfare outcome measures may be useful for providing assurances on higher levels of welfare.

Abstract
Tail docking of pigs is a routine procedure on farms to help control tail-biting behavior; however, docking can cause pain. The objective of this research was to evaluate the effect of local or general anesthesia on the physiology (experiment 1) and behavior (experiment 2) of tail docked pigs. Pigs were allocated to one of six treatment groups: (i) sham docking (CON); (ii) docking using conventional cutting (CUT) with side-cutting pliers; (iii) CUT docking plus local anesthesia injected immediately before docking (LA); (iv) CUT docking plus short-acting local anesthesia applied topically to the tail wound (SHORT); (v) CUT docking plus long-acting anesthesia applied topically to the tail wound (LONG) and (vi) CUT docking while the pig was anesthetized with carbon dioxide gas (CO\textsubscript{2}). In experiment 1, blood samples were collected from pigs (10 pigs per treatment) before and 30, 60 and 120 min after docking to measure leukocyte counts and percentages and cortisol concentrations. In experiment 2, the above treatments were repeated (10 pigs per treatment);
the percentage of stress vocalizations were recorded during the administration of the treatments and behavior was recorded for up to 120 min after docking or handling. All pigs were weighed before and 24 h after docking and wound healing was recorded until weaning. The neutrophil/lymphocyte ratio was greater (P<0.05) in CUT, LA, SHORT and LONG compared with CON pigs. At 30 min, cortisol concentrations were greater (P<0.05) in CUT, LA, LONG and CO₂ compared with CON pigs. Cortisol concentrations did not differ (P>0.05) between SHORT and CON pigs 30 min after docking. Cortisol concentrations did not differ (P>0.05) among pigs given pain relief at the time of docking compared with pigs’ docked without pain relief. Body weight change and wound scores did not differ (P>0.05) among treatments. The percentage of stress vocalizations increased (P<0.05) in response to docking or handling. The percentage of time pigs spent lying without contact after docking tended to be greater (P=0.06) in CUT pigs compared with all other docking treatments and CON pigs. In this study, none of the anesthesia treatments tested were effective at significantly changing the physiological or behavioral response to tail docking in pigs.

Publication Type
Journal article.

<21>
Accession Number
20103358193
Author
Schawalder, P.; Dietschi, E.; Stich, H.
Title
Congenital and acquired malformations of coccygeal vertebrae in dogs. [German]
Source
Publisher
BWK Public Relations - Brigitte Weber-Kraus
Location of Publisher
Wien
Country of Publication
Austria
Abstract
Introduction: The widespread occurrence of various malformations of coccygeal vertebrae in dogs has become evident since the ban on tail docking in Switzerland, and has lead to a call for new breeding recommendations. Published reports on examination procedures that may be useful to differentiate causes of tail malformations are scarce. Moreover, there is no classification of these malformations, which could serve as a basis for their assessment and on which breeding recommendations could be made. Material and methods: In the present study, coccygeal vertebral malformations are classified based on pathomorphological changes. This classification scheme may be used to standardize the evaluation of malformations by veterinary practitioners and consultants. Results and conclusion: Tail malformations were classified based on the evaluation of radiographs of 439 Hovawarts, as well as several dogs of other breeds that were radiographed because of palpable changes of the coccygeal vertebrae. Malformations were grouped according to their presumed pathogenesis. The major aspects of the embryological development of the coccyx are reviewed in preface to facilitate understanding of the various aspects of abnormal development in this region. The different types of malformations are illustrated with radiographs and photomicrographs of histological sections.
Publication Type
Journal article.

<22>
Accession Number
20103032808
Reconciling the differences between the length at which lambs' tails are commonly docked and animal welfare recommendations.

The rationale for the length at which lambs' tails are docked was investigated by comparing lambs with No-tail, Short, Medium (covering the vulva in ewe lambs and at a similar length in males), Long, and Undocked tails. In Experiment 1, dagging and shearing required additional effort in Long and Undocked animals. There were no differences in average dag scores, but few lambs had dags. Shorter tail docking resulted in significantly (P<0.05) lighter recto-coccygeal muscles (from 8.9±0.5 g in Undocked to 6.6±0.4 g in No-tail). The tail stumps of half of the No-tail, Short and Medium showed evidence of neuroma development and degenerative nerve changes compared with few of the Long and Undocked lambs. In Experiment 2, restlessness, an indicator of pain and distress in rubber ring docked lambs, tended to be more pronounced the shorter the tail was docked. Experiment 3 compared typical farm practices (Short), with the AWAC-recommended length (Medium). The slightly longer length was associated with (1) more lambs difficult to dag (11/44 Medium vs. 4/44 Short; P<0.001); and (2) no perceived benefits in increasing tail length. While the traditional Short and Medium tails appear to be the most appropriate, pain and distress, neuroma development and rectal muscle function may also be affected by tail length. It is yet to be determined if these additional factors justify a change to current practices but that possibility is considered unlikely.

Neurological, respiratory, behavioural and endocrine effects of tail docking in newborn dogs submitted to epidural anesthesia.

52 puppies ranging from 2 to 7 days of age were used. Sacrococcygeal epidural anaesthesia was performed using a 27 G x 1/2" needle and an insulin syringe filled with 0.2 mL of 0.5% lignocaine with adrenaline. Tail docking was performed in half of the puppies of each litter and the other half were
used as controls. Plasma cortisol concentration, weight gain, respiratory rate, vocalization, defecation, urination, movement and suction, anogenital, magnum, flexor, vestibular and tactile reflexes were investigated both before and 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 24 hours after tail docking. Data were compared using ANOVA, followed by Student Newman Keuls, Friedman or Mann-Whitney tests where applicable. Tail docking after epidural anaesthesia did not modify respiratory rate, behaviour, neurological reflexes or plasma cortisol concentration up to 24 hours after surgery. It should be considered that epidural anaesthesia might have masked a possible harmful effect of tail docking on these variables.

Publication Type
Journal article.

<24>
Accession Number
20083326600
Title
FAWC report on the implications of castration and tail docking for the welfare of lambs.
Source
Publisher
Farm Animal Welfare Council
Location of Publisher
Surbiton
Country of Publication
UK
Abstract
The justifications, methods and implications of castration and tail docking for the welfare of lambs in the UK and general recommendations for both procedures are reported in this paper.
Publication Type
Book.

<25>
Accession Number
20083034212
Author
Lefebvre, D.; Lips, D.; Giffroy, J. M.
Title
The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals and tail docking in dogs. (Special Issue: Plurithematic issue of the Scientific and Technical Review, 2007.)
Source
Publisher
Office International des Epizooties
Location of Publisher
Paris
Country of Publication
France
Abstract
The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals was opened for signature in Strasbourg on 13 November 1987 and entered into force on 1 May 1992. This Convention states that: 'Surgical operations for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a pet animal or for other non-curative purposes shall be prohibited and, in particular: the docking of tails'. At present, 15 of the 27 States in the European Union have ratified this Convention (with or without reserving their position on tail docking) and have prohibited cosmetic surgical operations. In addition, four European States have prohibited these operations, even though they did not ratify the Convention. These policy positions agree with both the current knowledge on tail amputations in dogs and the opinions of official veterinary associations in Europe and North America.
Tail docking in horses: a review of the issues.

Abstract
Routinely performed painful procedures are of increasing interest and, in 2001 (Royal Order, May 17), Belgium prohibited docking in several vertebrates including horses. In 2004, opponents to this decision submitted a Bill (Doc51 0969/001) to Parliament, intending to obtain derogation for Belgian draught horses, which were traditionally docked. The Animal Welfare Council of Belgium, an official body advising the Minister of Public Health, was asked to evaluate this complex question, including biological, ethical and socio-economic aspects, on the basis of the available peer-reviewed studies. In this context, this study reviews legal aspects (overview of the European legislation), zootechnic aspects (uses of the Belgian draught horse) and biological aspects (pain potentially related to docking; horses’ welfare linked to insect harassment and hygiene, communication and reproduction) of tail docking in draught horses. We conclude that (1) there is no benefit for horses in tail docking, including Belgian draught horses, (2) potential advantages of docking are essentially in favour of humans and these advantages could be scrupulously re-evaluated, taking into account practices of other countries. Therefore, there is no need to dock any horse other than for veterinary reasons.