The American Rottweiler Club
16005 Pine Creek Way
Magnolia, TX 77358

June 17, 2009

Gail Golab, D.V.M.
Chair, Animal Welfare Division
Animal Welfare Committee
American Veterinary Medical Association
1931 N. Meacham Rd., Suite 100
Schaumburg, IL 60173

RE: AVMA Revised Ear Cropping and Tail Docking Policy – OPPOSED

Dear Dr. Golab & Esteemed Members of the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee:

The American Rottweiler Club, Inc. (ARC), a nationwide, not-for-profit organization, is the American Kennel Club parent club for the Rottweiler breed in the United States, representing thousands of dog owners concerned with the lawful and humane tail docking procedures across the country.

It is with the greatest respect for the AMVA, and with the greatest concern, that we formally submit our letter of opposition to the recently revised policy position concerning ear cropping and tail docking, including the very guidelines for response which have been set for dissenting groups by the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee.

The AVMA's newly-revised policy represents a significant departure and illustrates a clear shift in the organization from a position of animal welfare to a position of animal rights.

By defining ALL cropping and docking procedures - heretofore standard veterinary medical practice - to be lacking any therapeutic value – and to be merely "cosmetic", the AVMA now "*encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking*" as part of a "strategic goal for animal welfare".

It is our sincere hope that, based on the detailed information provided within this letter and attached ARC Special Report, *An In Depth Investigation and Analysis of the Veterinary Medical Literature Concerning Ear Cropping and Tail Docking*, the AVMA will reconsider its position, as well as the serious, long-term implications not only for ownership of our breed, but all dogs, as well as the future of all animals.

We are committed to an open and respectful dialogue with the AVMA with regard to this issue.

As a very active breed club in the United States, and an important stakeholder representing thousands of dog owners and ultimately consumers of veterinary medical services, we affirm our commitment to working with the AVMA.

The membership of the American Rottweiler Club, and the Board of Directors, wish to thank the AMVA and the Animal Welfare Committee for its thoughtful consideration of this most important matter, as we both share an unbending commitment to the welfare of all dogs.

The American Rottweiler Club looks forward to your response

Very truly yours,

Jeff Shaver
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cc: American Rottweiler Club Board, Peter Piusz, Delegate

The American Rottweiler Club

SPECIAL REPORT

The Investigation and Analysis of the Veterinary Medical Literature Regarding Ear Cropping and Tail Docking

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The Impact of Animal Rights Extremism Upon the Veterinary Profession and Globalization of Animal Welfare Legislation

June 17, 2009

The Legislative Committee
The American Rottweiler Club

About The American Rottweiler Club

The American Rottweiler Club is a 501 (c) 3 organization dedicated to the promotion of the Rottweiler breed in the United States, the advancement of animal welfare and animal health, and advocating for fair, enforceable legislation that protects animals and the public health.

About This Special Report

The American Rottweiler Club has gathered citations from numerous veterinary journals, publications both on- and off-line and out-of-print texts for commentary and criticism; which constitutes "fair use" of these materials in the preparation and presentation of this Special Report.

We wish to thank the ARC Legislative Committee, specifically Barbara Haywood and Gwen Chaney, for their extensive research and contributions to this report, Ms. Barbara Kolk of the AKC Library for her specialized contributions of the historical texts and knowledge of breeds in the context of 18th, 19th and 20th century literature, and the many breed clubs around the world who have shared their insights regarding animal rights extremism and its impact upon the veterinary profession, positions and legislation on a global basis.

ARC's Commitment To Animal Welfare

The American Rottweiler Club is deeply committed to the highest level of care for our dogs, and NOTHING is more important than the health and welfare of our dogs, which is the very reason for the existence of our club.

That the American Rottweiler Club is a clearly and unequivocally opposed to inhumane treatment of any animal is a fact without question.

As careful and conscientious stewards of our breed, our mission is and always has been to promote the health and welfare of the Rottweiler. The dedication, knowledge and passion that our members bring to the table helps to elevate the welfare of the Rottweiler and indeed, all dogs.

Rottweiler owners, through various Rottweiler groups, fund veterinary medical research at numerous vet schools across the country, and provide financial support to at least forty-five different Rottweiler rescue groups, including groups that rescue mixed breed dogs, as well as dogs *with and without* docked tails.

Our commitment to our dogs, the advancement of animal welfare and the human-animal bond, runs deep.

The Rottweiler Breed Standard and ARC Mandatory Practices

The American Rottweiler Club welcomes all input, suggestions and recommendations from the AVMA, as we value this input which in turn facilitates an open dialogue between our organizations.

We advise the AVMA that it is the American Rottweiler Club, in our role as the AKC Parent Club for the Rottweiler in the United States, which is solely responsible for setting and maintaining the Breed Standard for the Rottweiler.

Safeguarding the health and welfare of the Rottweiler is one of the purposes for which breed clubs are intended. The American Rottweiler Club also supports Mandatory Practices for its members. These rules and guidelines have their basis in the support and advancement of the health and welfare of our breed. Through these practices and other guidelines, our members ever strive to protect future generations of our breed.

The Breed Standard and Mandatory Practices are truly a testament to the deep and unshakeable commitment the American Rottweiler Club and its members have in the advancement of animal welfare.

Changes to our Breed Standard have been carefully developed and managed since the recognition of the Rottweiler in 1939.

The ARC Position On Tail Docking

We concur with the American Kennel Club that ear cropping and tail docking, as prescribed in certain breed standards, is an acceptable practice integral to defining and preserving breed character, enhancing good health, and preventing injuries - and *not merely for cosmetic purposes.*

The Rottweiler Breed Standard was first approved in 1939, eight years after the first Rottweiler was registered in the AKC Stud Book.

Prior to that time, the Rottweiler was a docked breed in Europe. The ARC stands firm in supporting our Breed Standard "Tail - Tail docked short, close to body, leaving one or two tail vertebrae."

These Breed Standards have been carefully developed from centuries of breeding and sound veterinary medical advice to promote the optimum health and functionality of the Rottweiler in every role imaginable, from beloved household pets, to therapy dogs, to herding or working dogs.

As the many veterinary medical professionals who have cared for our breed since 1939 can attest, as well as those veterinarians caring for any number of the 79 docked or cropped breeds, tail docking and dew claw removal, when done within days of birth on a healthy puppy, are as non-invasive a surgery that is ever performed on any canine. The puppies never miss a meal.

It is the position of the American Rottweiler Club that the AVMA's revised policy defining all tail docking as "cosmetic" by default does a great disservice to our members and their professional veterinary medical care providers, who have worked together over the years to provide the very highest levels of care to our beloved breed.

ARC Rejects The AVMA's Revised Crop & Dock Policy

The American Rottweiler Club, having duly considered each and every aspect of the AVMA revised policy on ear cropping and tail docking, rejects this policy in its entirety.

The AVMA position change carries the burden of a vast number of intended and unintended consequences, which are detailed in this letter.

The American Rottweiler Club has articulated the core issues with the revised AVMA policy on ear cropping and tail docking, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **The AVMA now defines ALL cropping/docking procedures as "*cosmetic*" – and in so doing negates any other basis for these procedures**
2. **The AVMA position lacks any empirical, data-driven scientific evidence**
3. **The AVMA position aligns with animal rights extremists, relies solely on citations specific to anti-crop/anti-dock campaigners in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, responsible for driving the anti-cropping/docking legislation in those countries or outdated, historical materials dating to the 19th and early 20th centuries.**
4. **NONE of the AVMA citations emanate from veterinary authors or related veterinary journals in the United States**
5. **Current AVMA publications concerning ear cropping and tail docking are deliberately false and misleading**
6. **The AVMA "Guidelines For Response" are in effect a reverse onus**
7. **The AVMA "Guidelines For Response" holds dissenters to a different and higher standard of "proof" than the AVMA requires of itself**
8. **The AVMA position interferes with the private relationship between dog owners and their veterinary healthcare providers**
9. **The AVMA position is the foundation for the criminalization of dog ownership and standard and legal veterinary medical practices.**
10. **The AVMA position is part of an initiative to "globalize" animal welfare laws**

About Our Official Response

It was imperative that the American Rottweiler Club respond to the AVMA regarding this important policy change in a thoughtful and precise manner.

With regard to the direction given to the ARC by the AVMA in the context of "*AVMA Guidelines for Response*", which dictates that "*requests for revisions of policy be accompanied by "data-based evidence" that supports the benefits (or detriments*)" of said policies, we have worked hard to fulfill these guidelines.

Therefore, due diligence dictated that if our response was to adhere to the *AVMA Guidelines or Response,* that we conduct in-depth research and review of the contemporary and historical veterinary literature, and follow it with a complete audit and analysis, in order to provide the requested data-based evidence.

To aid in our research, the American Rottweiler Club has gathered a broad network of expert veterinary medical, historical and legal resources.

The scope of our research has literally covered several hundred years, and you will be pleased to know that our efforts have included a complete and thorough search for each statement made by the AVMA, and every publicly available reference cited by the AVMA in support of its revised position opposing all ear cropping and tail docking.

We are sure that the esteemed members of the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee will agree that the sound research, analysis and summary of the AVMA position materials is of benefit to all stakeholders, including other dog clubs or animal-related organizations, pet owners, veterinarians and public policy makers concerned with the AVMA's revised policy on cropping and docking.

ARC Research & Analysis Summary

Our research included sourcing each AVMA citation, analyzing the written text of AVMA position publications concerning tail docking in the context of the citations, and providing a summary of the relevance of the actual citations to the AVMA's position paper.

We felt it important to facilitate a clear understanding of this response for both the members of the American Rottweiler Club as well as the AVMA.

Therefore, we have provided the esteemed members of the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee a compendium of our research and analyses, which includes:

- **A full audit and analysis of the AVMA's revised crop/dock position**
- **A full audit and analysis of the AVMA's online publication, *Canine Tail Docking: Frequently Asked Questions*, *including* research & analysis of twenty-five (25) citations listed**
- **A full audit and analysis of the AVMA's paper, *The Welfare Implications of Dogs: Tail Docking*, (Oct. 2008) *including* research & analysis of each of the thirteen (13) citations**
- **Inventory of non-US-based citations**
- **Bios and biases of authors cited by AVMA's Animal Welfare Committee**
- **Timeline of anti-cropping/docking movement**

Summary Of Findings

Our findings of the materials and citations used by the AVMA are troubling, to say the least.

The results of the research and audit conducted by the ARC clearly show that the revised AVMA policy is *not* based on any data-driven science *whatsoever,* but rather a political philosophy, which signals a new and disturbing change from within the AVMA organization.

This change is one clearly aligned with a political agenda, radical Animal Rights Agenda, and reveals the drive to "harmonize" animal welfare laws and policies with those found abroad, (UK, AU, NZ) here in the United States.

In other words – the globalization of the animal rights agenda is within reach and proponents seek to impose its extremist philosophy upon the citizens of the United States via the AVMA.

Most alarming is the fact that the AVMA, an organization which purports to be an "*authoritative, science-based resource for animal welfare",* has now departed from its standard of veterinary and journalistic ethics by publishing a biased position, one which lacks any basis in science, an action which seriously undermines the public trust.

While a complete summary our research can be found in the Addendum to this document, we note the following:

- **NONE of the citations used by the AVMA contain any empirical, science-based or data-based evidence whatsoever**
- **Most of the authors cited by the AVMA show a clear bias for an "animal rights" agenda**
- **Many of the AVMA citations date to the 19th century, when medicine in general, let alone veterinary medicine, was practiced without the benefit of sterile instruments or in sterile environments**
- **None of the contemporary veterinary citations used by the AVMA originate in the United States**

The Reverse Onus In "AVMA Guidelines For Response"

The "*AVMA Guidelines For Response*" - sent to the American Rottweiler Club by the AVMA - contain the singular yet disingenuous requirement that anyone opposing or challenging the AVMA Revised Policy on Ear Cropping and Tail Docking must supply "***data-based evidence***" (as compared to anecdotal opinion) that "*supports the practices of tail docking and ear cropping as "cosmetic* procedures".

By its own admission, the AVMA is fully aware that **no such data-based evidence exists - because no studies have been conducted** to support the therapeutic value of "***cosmetic***" procedures – i.e. cropping or docking of dogs.

Yet, the AVMA has set the submission of such "data-based evidence" to be the only means by which the AVMA will consider any request for a revision to the policy.

Such a requirement might be analogous to the famous directive in the Wizard of Oz, in which the wizard utters "*Bring Me The Broom of The Wicked Witch Of The West"*, clearly setting a task which is deemed a failure from the start.

By requiring that one must PROVE the existence of research that does not exist, the AVMA has thereby created a reverse onus.

This seems more an act of backroom political manipulations, one designed to squash any legitimate criticism, rather than a sincere effort coming from an organization founded for the purpose of advancing science and ethics in the practice of veterinary medicine.

The AVMA Sets Double Standard For Dissenting Groups

The American Rottweiler Club is submitting this letter to the Animal Welfare Committee in an earnest and sincere effort to appeal this revision of policy.

However, we have found that the parameters set by the AVMA for submissions of opposition to be quite disingenuous.

This is due to the fact that the AVMA has set a higher and different standard of measure against which the Animal Welfare Committee would judge the merits of a possible review of those in dissent, while at the same time lowering or eliminating the application of those same standards when applied to itself.

Again, we are specifically referring to the requirement that those in opposition “supply data-based evidence”, when none exists.

Therefore, the AVMA has knowingly set a task which cannot be accomplished by any organization which disagrees with or challenges the AVMA policy – because such research does not exist, for or against.

Transparency & Composition Of AVMA's Animal Welfare Committee & Subcommittees

In making this policy revision, we naturally asked the questions, "How was this decision made?" and "Who at the AVMA made this decision?" and "Whose interest does this decision serve?"

The answers to Who, How and Why, we're told by the AVMA in the context of the *AVMA Guidelines For Response*, is that recommended revisions to policy are made:

1. **After completion of literature reviews by the Animal Welfare Committee (or subcommittee)**
2. **Followed by deliberations by an assigned subcommittee of the Animal Welfare Committee**
3. **Followed by deliberations by the full Animal Welfare Committee**
4. **Followed by submissions of the subcommittee to the Executive Board**

In addition to the professional community, the AVMA serves the public interest - and in doing so, has an ethical obligation to ensure that its organizational structure is fully transparent.

Such transparency is necessary to ensure that policies and position statements are made in the interest of the science of animal welfare, and not in the interest of special groups. As to Why and How the committee came to decide upon the revised cropping and docking policy:

> ***"As part of the review of the 1999 policy, which began more than 18 months ago, the committee and the Animal Welfare Division searched the scientific literature for evidence showing cosmetic ear crops of dogs have therapeutic effects. That search revealed that justifications for the procedures lacked substantial scientific support, with the exception of some suggestive, but inconclusive, data related to German Shorthaired Pointers before and after a docking ban in Sweden, Dr. Golab said."***

We therefore ask the AVMA the following questions:

- **Who sits on the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee?**
- **Who sits on the AVMA Animal Welfare Subcommittee?**
- **How many members sit on each committee?**
- **What is the composition of the committees – how many veterinarians versus the number of allied professionals or laypeople**
- **What are the organizational affiliations of the committee members?**

Transparency & Composition Of AVMA's Animal Welfare Committee & Subcommittees – cont'd.

In the interest of transparency, we respectfully ask the AVMA to release for the record, the names of the members of both the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee and the "assigned subcommittee" who served to recommend the policy change on ear cropping and tail docking.

In terms of the history of this committee, on January 15, 2005, *JAVMA News* reported that then president, Dr. Bonnie Beaver instituted the creation of the Animal Welfare Division, Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, "**intended to be a 'visionary group'** that would advise the Executive Board about future welfare issues".

Consisting **of five voting members** appointed by the Executive Board**, at least three members must be veterinarians,** which infers that there are members who are not veterinarians**,** assembled to **"**judge proposed animal welfare position statements and resolutions", "recommend positions or actions", and "**work with the animal welfare committees of allied organizations"**.

We also respectfully ask the AVMA to make full disclosure regarding this committee.

AVMA Defines ALL Docking & Cropping As "Cosmetic"

The revised AVMA policy – *by default* – now defines all cropping and docking procedures to be "cosmetic" – a position which has no basis in science.

> ***"The AVMA opposes ear cropping and tail docking of dogs when done solely for cosmetic purposes. The AVMA encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking from breed standards".***
>
> ***AVMA Policy: Ear Cropping and Tail Docking of Dogs***
> ***(Oversight: AWC; HOD 07/1999, EB revised 11/2008)***

This simple-sounding statement may sound innocuous on the surface. It is nothing of the sort. It holds a deep well of consequences for animals, animal owners, and the veterinary profession, both intended and unintended.

AVMA Position Lacks Scientific Support

We respectfully point out to the AVMA that there is a lack of scientific support regarding the procedures – both for and against ear cropping & tail docking" – period.

Defending the revised policy, the AVMA stated,

> ***"The basis of the policy's most recent revision wasn't just someone's unsubstantiated opinion," Dr. Golab said. "The results of the committee's scientific review provide good justification for the policy. Any policy that comes out of the AVMA will be a combination of professional opinion, practical experience, and what we know about the science. In this case, the science appears to lend clear support to the policy."***
>
> ***Ear crop, tail dock policy not a radical departure, AVMA says***
> ***Science doesn't show therapeutic benefits of cosmetic procedures***
> **- AVMA News, March 15, 2009**

We respectfully but adamantly disagree with Dr. Golab's statement above. Having conducted a thorough review:

1. We find that the basis for the AVMA revised position *IS* unsubstantiated opinion – albeit a published unsubstantiated opinion.

2. We find the results of the committee's "*scientific review*" do not provide justification for the change in policy due to the fact that there is no data-based science to support the AVMA position – only opinion, and primarily the opinion of anti-docking, animal rights activists.

3. We find that the basis for formulating AVMA policy as stated above – "professional opinion, practical experience and what we know about science", to be extremely vague and lacking the basic foundation of true, empirical data-driven science.

4. We find that science does NOT support this AVMA policy.

AVMA Position Lacks Scientific Support – cont'd.

By its own admission, the AVMA recognizes the lack of any scientific studies with regard to cropping and docking, stating "*the practice has been the subject of very few controlled studies comparing otherwise equivalent dogs whose tails are docked or undocked".*

> ***AVMA Backgrounder: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking (October 13,/2008)***
>
> ***WELFARE CONCERNS—RISKS***
> *The welfare issues surrounding tail docking have been extensively reviewed,*[1,2,3,4] *but the practice has been the subject of* ***very few controlled studies comparing otherwise equivalent dogs whose tails are docked or undocked.***
>
> **http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/dogs_tail_docking_bgnd.asp**

In fact, NONE of the AVMA referenced citations listed as sources in the *AVMA Backgrounder: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking* refer to any controlled studies whatsoever.

The truth is that no research has *ever* been conducted in this area to **prove or disprove** the "therapeutic" value of ear crops or tail docks, and any inference by the AVMA that such procedures are harmful or cruel are false and misleading.

We respectfully request that if the AVMA has knowledge of any controlled studies comparing the differences between docked and undocked dogs, that the AVMA make full disclosure of this critical information.

> ***"There have been no scientific studies or double blind trials conducted to compare the effects of tail docking in one sample of dogs with a similar sample of undocked dogs. Similarly, there have been no studies to measure the initial pain and the ongoing pathological pain inflicted on docked dogs".***
>
> **Robert Wansborough, Australian Veterinarian & Anti-Docking Activist**
> **AVMA Welfare Implications of Dogs: Tail Docking Oct. 13, 2008 - Citation # 3**

Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence anywhere in the world, nor in any repository of veterinary literature, which proves that docked dogs suffer from pain, impaired ability to communicate with humans or other dogs, or that they suffer behavioral or emotional issues, or a loss of balance.

We therefore submit that there exists no data-based, empirical evidence "proving" that ear crops or tail docks cause pain, increase risk of infection, prevent or inhibit communication or locomotion, or are in any other way, detrimental to dogs.

AVMA Position Aligns With Animal Rights Groups

While the AVMA claims not to support one side or the other in issues, we have noted that this particular AVMA revision in policy signals a troubling change within the organization.

The March 15, 2009 edition of the *JAVMA News* contained an article which was clearly intended to defend its newly revised position from critics, especially those making the obvious connection between the AVMA and the radical Animal Rights agenda of anti-cropping and anti-docking.

The *JAVMA News* article entitled, "***Ear crop, tail dock policy not a radical departure, AVMA says***" (http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/mar09/090315c.asp) also contains the sub-headline, "*Science doesn't show the* ***therapeutic benefits of cosmetic procedures***".

It opens with a mention that the Humane Society of the United States, an animal rights lobbying group, commending the AVMA for its stance and outlines the history of the policy, and how the Animal Welfare Committee came to review the position.

Perhaps to justify its new position, the AVMA prominently featured a quote from a letter to the JAVMA editor by Dr. Barbara Hodges on behalf of the Humane Society VMA,

> **"*It is a strong statement in opposition to these procedures when performed for nontherapeutic purposes*," wrote Dr. Barbara Hodges.**

Notably absent from this *JAVMA News* article was an opposing point of view, along with balance. Such balance is an ethical necessity in journalism – whether published in a professional journal such as *JAVMA* or in public-facing media such as the *New York Times.*

The exclusion of other points of view, make clear the direction in which the AVMA seems headed. Along with the AVMA, other **groups that oppose ear cropping and tail docking include**:

- **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals**
- **Humane Society of the United States**
- **Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights**
- **In Defense of Animals**

In 2008, the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights "combined" - or merged with the Humane Society of the United States to form the Humane Society VMA.

Humane Society of the United States = Association of Veterinarians or Animal Rights.

New name, same agenda. According to past JAVMA News articles, the Humane Society VMA (Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights) now submits resolutions to the AVMA for consideration on a regular basis.

ARC Rejects Tail Docking Myths Unsupported By Science

As the AVMA's own citations will show, no "data-based evidence" exists regarding tail docking.

The American Rottweiler Club rejects the hyper-inflated claims of extremist groups seeking to advance a legislative agenda of anti-cropping/anti-docking measures.

Unfounded claims by these groups include animal cruelty, extreme pain, risk of infection, impairment of locomotion, impairment of communication, and so on.

There is a complete lack of any proof period, and none of these "conditions" have been the experience of breeders, or the veterinarians who have cared for the millions of cropped and docked dogs over the course of the last century.

Comparison Of Tail Docking To Other "Non-Theraputic" Procedures

If there was a procedure to be singled out for comparison on the issues of pain, risk of infection, length of recovery – and a lack of therapeutic effect – it would be spay/neuter surgeries.

The veterinary literature is overwhelmingly conclusive in finding that spay and neuter is not therapeutic in nature, but rather is detrimental to the health and welfare of the dogs, causing some cancers, hormonal interruptions, aggressive behavior and other maladies attributed to the spaying or neutering of dogs.

Furthermore, most spay/neuter surgeries are "for the benefit of humans" and the positive effects are outweighed by the impressive list of negative side effects.

JAVMA News: EXECUTIVE BOARDCOVERAGE (May 15, 2009)

AVMA: Mandatory Spay/Neuter A Bad Idea

"Prevention of unexpected litters; reduced incidences of some cancers and reproductive diseases; and prevention and amelioration of certain undesirable behaviors have been documented as benefits to spaying/neutering dogs and cats. However, potential health problems associated with spaying and neutering have also been identified, including an increased risk of prostatic cancer in males; increased risks of bone cancer and hip dysplasia in large-breed dogs associated with sterilization before maturity; and increased incidences of obesity, diabetes, urinary tract infections, urinary incontinence, and hypothyroidism".

http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/may09/090515j.asp

Science has indeed shown that animals undergoing such procedures suffer pain, are at increased risk of infection, experience extended recovery times and also suffer a host of ill-effects.

Will then the AVMA revise its existing policy, to recommend the elimination of spay/neuter surgeries as procedures done purely for the benefit of humans, with little or no therapeutic value?

AVMA Materials Are Misleading

The AVMA has published several papers on its website regarding cropping and docking which contain false and misleading information. The American Rottweiler Club, having researched each and every citation presented by the AVMA, concludes that the information the AVMA presents is misleading, at best.

While a full list of the citations is found in the addendum, we call your attention to the alarming number of misleading citations contained just in one document alone.

AVMA Welfare Implications of Dogs: Tail Docking (Oct. 2008)

Welfare Implications of
Dogs: Tail Docking
(October 13, 2008)

THE ISSUE

Some dog breed standards and traditions specify or allow the amputation of part of a dog's tail. Cosmetic surgery is generally not allowed to be performed on show dogs, but tail docking is an exception for breeds for which this is customary. In the United States the tails of dogs belonging to these breeds are often docked, in both working and pet situations.

DOCKING

Puppies' tails are docked during the first five days of life, either surgically or with a constricting band.

WELFARE CONCERNS—RISKS

The welfare issues surrounding tail docking have been extensively reviewed,[1,2,3,4] but the practice has been the subject of very few controlled studies comparing otherwise equivalent dogs whose tails are docked or undocked.

Pain—Surgical amputation of the dog's tail produces behaviors indicative of short-term pain.[5]

Complications—As with any surgical procedure, there is potential for complications such as excessive bleeding, infection, and necrosis. Neuromas, which have been associated with chronic pain, may develop, but their incidence and persistence is not known.

Chronic Health Issues—It has been suggested that dogs whose tails are docked may have underdeveloped pelvic musculature; the evidence, however, is not conclusive. Dogs of breeds that are docked have a higher incidence of incontinence; however, this may be due to traits other than docked tails.[6] Dogs with docked tails within some breeds may have less well developed *levator ani* and *coccygeus* muscles.[7]

REASONS GIVEN FOR THE PRACTICE

Human Benefits—The primary reason for tail docking appears to be maintenance of a distinctive appearance for a particular breed, and to take part in an ongoing tradition. The value some communities place on docking may indirectly affect animal welfare if it motivates less skilled persons to carry out a procedure when a veterinarian refuses to perform that procedure, or if a dog whose tail is not docked is less able to be placed in a suitable home.

Animal Benefits—It has been suggested that docking protects the animal from later tail damage, in cases where the breed is more vulnerable or more likely to experience tail injury during its activities (e.g., breeds that hunt in thick cover and have vigorous tail action). Tail injuries generally have a low rate of occurrence[8] and many working breeds' tails go undocked. However, the German Shorthaired Pointer Breed Council collected breeder reports showing a high incidence of tail injury after the 1990 ban on docking in Sweden. It is possible that some breeds and uses are particularly vulnerable to tail trauma, but peer-reviewed data is lacking.

It has also been suggested that accidental tail trauma to the adult dog causes more suffering than amputation early in life. Although it is not currently accepted that puppies experience less pain than adult dogs, especially as analgesia is *rarely* provided for them, they can be docked quickly under controlled circumstances while fully restrained; this could minimize the chance for prolonged suffering.

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division.

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Written by the AVMA's Animal Welfare Committee,

A full audit of each of the references cited by the AVMA is included in this document.

In the paragraph below is an excerpt of the *AVMA Welfare Implications of Dogs: Tail Docking* (Oct. 2008), in which the AVMA deliberately infers that tail docking is considered unacceptable by most veterinarians and the public:

> ***LEGISLATION AND ACCEPTABILITY***
> *Across a range of countries routine docking is considered* ***unacceptable by most veterinarians (83 to 92%[9,10])*** *and the general public (68 to 88%[11]). In contrast,* ***many breeders with a prior commitment to this practice[12] remain in favor of tail docking (84 to 87%[13,]).***

AVMA Materials Are Misleading – cont'd.

After reading the paragraph above, *most readers* would conclude that both the veterinary community AND the public – including those here in the UNITED STATES – view routine docking as "unacceptable" by large margins – 83 to 92% for veterinarians and 68 to 88% for the public.

The above section of this AVMA publication is misleading.

The AVMA presents this information A) as if this was true in the United States and B) as if the AVMA had firsthand experience of this study by presenting this information in the context of being written by the AVMA itself – seemingly to represent those views to include those held in United States.

But most readers would be shocked to learn that the percentages quoted by the AVMA in the paragraph above have *NOTHING* to do with any survey of the views of the veterinary community here in the United States, nor does it represent the views of the public here in the United States.

Instead, this paragraph deceptively refers to *two highly disputed surveys in Australia and the UK*.

The AVMA writes that *"routine docking is considered unacceptable by most veterinarians (83 to 92%[9,10]) and the general public (68 to 88%[11]).*

Other misleading citations in this AVMA document refer to:

- **Citation #9** refers to a 1996 article in the ***Australian*** *Veterinary Journal* by three activist veterinarians, seeking to support the enactment of anti-docking legislation. The article was entitled, "*Tail docking in dogs: a sample of attitudes of veterinarians and dog breeders in* ***Queensland***.

- **Citation #10** refers to a 1992 survey of a small sample **British** veterinarians – just 25% of small animal veterinarians - a survey which was highly contested by the UK's Council of Docked Breeds for being driven by animal rights extremists at the RSPCA http://www.cdb.org/vets/bsava.htm According to the UK Council of Docked Breeds, this sample was too narrow to accurately represent the views of the majority of veterinarians in the UK.

- **Citation #11** refers to another poll (highly contested by the NZ Council of Docked Breeds) conducted by the vegan/animal rights activists at the **New Zealand** SPCA NZ SPCA (*Expose Animal Cruelty – Open Your Fridge*) which allegedly showed public support for a ban on tail docking in the 2005 document, "Submission to Government Administration Committee", another effort in to push through a tail docking ban in that country http://rnzspca.org.nz/images/stories/submissions/submission-taildocking_bill.pdf The sample size of the NZ SPCA survey is not mentioned, nor are any other survey details, (age, how/when/where conducted, survey demographics, etc.)

AVMA Materials Are Misleading – cont'd.

The AVMA then writes, *"In contrast, many breeders with a prior commitment to this practice[12] remain in favor of tail docking (84 to 87%[13,])", which refers to:*

- **Citation #12** refers to a 2003 article by **Australian** anti-docking supporters Bennett and Perini in the ***Australian Veterinary Journal*** entitled, "*Tail docking in dogs: can attitude change be achieved?"* Neither Patricia Bennett or E. Perini are veterinarians, but psychologists.

- **Citation #13** refers to a survey by **UK** Council of Docked Breeds that is no longer available on the web.

This AVMA publication, *Welfare Implications of Dogs: Tail Docking* (Oct. 2008), was written and "*prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division*".

AVMA Position Is Foundation For Anti-Cropping & Anti-Docking Legislation

The AVMA revision of policy has now set in motion a tremendous surge of anti-cropping, anti-docking legislation, driven largely by the HSUS lobbying machine.

These HSUS backed-bills have has been quickly introduced into several state legislatures, including the AVMA's home state of Illinois. Samples of anti-cropping/anti-docking legislation proposed include:

ILLINOIS	Illinois bill introduced to State Legislation making cropping & docking a crime, defining it as not just animal abuse, but **torture.**
NEW YORK	New York state bill making it a **crime to show any dog that has been docked**, thereby greatly reducing, if not eliminating, the hundreds of dog shows held annually throughout New York State.
CALIFORNIA	California state bill making it a crime to dock cattle, a strategy which will no doubt seek to expand language to include other species – such as dogs – and thereby accomplishing the anti-docking objective of animal rights extremist through the backdoor.
PENNSYLVANIA	Pennsylvania state bill codifying the criminalization of **possession of a cropped or docked dog as prima facie evidence of a crime** unless in possession of a "certificate". Debarking, declawing and surgical births are also included.

AVMA Invites Government Interference In Practice Of Veterinary Medicine

In revising its position on ear cropping and tail docking, the AVMA has also set the stage for government interference in the private practice of veterinary medicine.

The resulting spate of legislation based on AVMA policy which in turn criminalizes the procedures, will no doubt have a chilling effect on the performance of ear cropping and tail docking– which seems the intent of the AVMA policy.

But the direct result of this will also be that veterinarians will find themselves constrained in their practice by what any state legislature deems to be a practice that constitutes “abuse, torture or animal cruelty”.

If such government interference is allowed to take hold, which veterinary procedures will next be outlawed, banned or restricted based on political correctness or the opinions of a small but vocal group of animal activists?

Will the practice of veterinary medicine then be subject to the whims of uninformed local or state legislators, all based on questionable AVMA policy?

Such policy is folly, and can only lead to great harm to animals, pet owners and to the veterinarians themselves.

AVMA Position - Criminalizing Veterinary Medicine & Practitioners

In revising its position on cropping and docking, the AVMA surely has considered the impact that the resulting anti-cropping & docking legislation will have upon the larger, mainstream, professional veterinary community.

As has been the case in the UK, and other countries where anti-docking measures have passed, anti-docking proponents have injected severe penalties into legislation which severely punish the veterinary professionals who perform these procedures.

Professional veterinary associations abroad have even charged veterinarians with professional misconduct, imposing fines, loss of licensure and pressing for criminal prosecutions.

In light of these realities, the American Rottweiler Club is seeking a direct answer from the AVMA on behalf of its members and the veterinarians that care for our breed:

QUESTION A: **Does the AVMA support the criminalization of these lawful veterinary procedures, and does the AVMA support the soon-to-follow criminalization of the professional community they represent?**

QUESTION B : **Does the AVMA support sanctioning veterinarians with crimes of professional misconduct, including fines and loss of licenses for performing such procedures?**

QUESTION C: **Does the AVMA support the criminal prosecution of veterinarians who perform cropping & docking procedures, including the penalties of fines and jail time?**

AVMA Position - Interferes With Private Relationships With Veterinary Healthcare Providers

As responsible and caring dog owners, we depend on our veterinarians to work with us to make wise decisions concerning health of our dogs.

However, the revised AVMA policy – regardless of the status of any legislation – will now significantly interfere with the private and protected relationship between an animal owner and his or her veterinary healthcare provider.

As noted by the Utah VMA, it is not for the AVMA to decide which surgeries pet owners want or do not want for their pets – as these are decisions that are best made privately by pet owners and their veterinarians.

AVMA Position - Criminalizes Dog Ownership

As evidenced by the surge in anti-cropping/anti-docking bills before numerous state legislatures, the AVMA position change on ear cropping and tail docking has already had the impact of swiftly criminalizing the ownership of cropped or docked dogs.

These laws create an entire criminal class out of law-abiding pet owners who are your clients, as consumers of veterinary medical services.

We have detailed the legal impact of revised AVMA policy on dog owners below.

AVMA Position - Eliminating Presumption Of Innocence

Legislation based on revised AVMA policy **eliminates the presumption of innocence** making all dog owners of "cropped or docked dogs" **automatically guilty – possession of a cropped or docked dog is prima facie evidence of a violation of law.**

Under the rules of our judiciary, it is unimaginable to think that a state government would create a reverse onus – thus shifting the burden of proof from the state to the accused – but to do so based on a lack of data-driven scientific evidence is unthinkable.

We respectfully remind the Committee Members that our judicial system operates upon the presumption that all citizens in the United States **are innocent until proven guilty**, not the reverse.

AVMA Position - Proxy For Warrantless Search & Seizure

It should be noted that legislation based on revised AVMA policy contains the **proxy for warrantless searches** and seizures, which **seriously compromises the constitutional protections** to which all citizens are entitled - under the guise of animal protection.

Civil liberties groups and criminal defense attorneys should be alerted to the fact that such legislation is a **smokescreen** to lower the threshold of evidence needed to support the issuance of search warrants.

VMA Position - Lowers Thresholds of Evidence For Probable Cause

Furthermore, the issuance of any warrants, arrests or other violations of law would be based on a visual ID that the alleged dogs have cropped ears or docked tails.

Would it then not be a case of "probable cause" for law enforcement personnel to demand that pet owners produce a "certificate" that shows said dog's minor surgical procedure – crop/dock – was performed by a "licensed, trained veterinarian? These are already being proposed in some states, Pennsylvania being but one example.

A) **the evidentiary basis for "probable cause**" is the visual ID of a Rottweiler or Welsh Corgi with a docked tail

B) this "**probable cause**" **is nothing more than proxy** for warrantless searches by local animal control or police

C) **such proxies** would be the basis for **bypassing Due Process:**

SENARIO A: Warrantless Search of Premises

The mere possession of cropped or docked dogs would now constitute a criminal act, thus allowing law enforcement officers ***access to a premises without a warrant***.

EXAMPLE: A police officer drives by a home and sees dogs with cropped ears staked in the yard. The officer identifies the dogs as "cropped", the presence of which is "illegal". The dog owner is presumed guilty of a criminal act. The police officer now may access the premises and ***bypasses the need for a search warrant***.

SCENARIO B: Warrantless Searches – Traffic Stops

Driving with a cropped or docked dog - or "showdogs" - in a car constitutes a criminal act unless said owner can produce a "certificate" of legal cropping or docking

EXAMPLE: A police officer on highway patrol or traffic duty sees a car with a dog inside. The officer has no probable cause for a traffic stop (speeding, seat belt or other violations).The officer (subjectively) identifies the dogs as a "docked dogs", the presence of which is "illegal".

The dog owner is presumed guilty of a criminal act. The police officer now has "cause" for a traffic stop.

AVMA Position: Basis For Violations Of Equal Protection

Legislation based on the AVMA revised policy also sets the stage for violations of Equal Protection.

Owners of "targeted breeds – i.e. cropped or docked breeds, such as the Rottweiler or American Pit Bull Terrier - will be subject to a different and higher legal standard than other dog-owning citizens, which is then subjectively and/or arbitrarily applied.

The Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment protects against arbitrary government action by requiring similar treatment of those who are similarly situated.

Such legislation clearly violates Equal Protection by singling out owners of multiple "cropped or docked breeds", and granting exemptions to those "similarly situated."

As in the case of breed specific legislation, anti-docking proponents have not proven, nor cannot prove, a rational or legal basis upon which to base these provisions, given the fact that no data-based, scientific evidence exists to support such laws.

This scenario also begs the question,

> **"Are owners of dogs with natural ears or tails entitled to any greater Constitutional protections than owners of cropped or docked dogs"?**

It is the position of the American Rottweiler Club that all dog owners are entitled to Equal Protection under the law.

AVMA Position: Fosters Selective Enforcement

However, there is an even greater risk in legislation based on AVMA policy as it relates to Unequal Protection.

There is a pervasive myth, perpetuated throughout the media, that the majority of Rottweiler owners or even owners of “pit bull type dogs” are “gang members, criminals, and drug dealers”.

This notion is completely unsubstantiated and without merit. However, this viewpoint is interpreted by most to mean that Rottweilers or “pit bull dogs” are owned by those in certain segments of society.

It then becomes a question of which dog owners will be **selectively targeted for enforcement** and prosecution by local authorities, and to what extent will law enforcement engage in “profiling”.

Clearly, legislation based on AVMA revised policy leaves the door open to abuse of powers by local law enforcement officials and creates a number of questions.

For instance:

- **Will minority or poor dog owners be targeted for enforcement over non-minority or middle class dog owners?**
- **Will owners of hunting dogs or American Pit Bull Terriers be targeted for enforcement?**
- **Will anti-cropping/anti-docking legislation be used to dispense with evidence thresholds necessary to establish probable cause as in the case of breed-specific legislation, and thereby create a proxy to bypass Due Process?**

AVMA – Is Global Harmonization Harmful To "Good" Science?

It's clear that on a global basis, the anti-cropping/anti-docking movement led by extremist groups has been successful in the banning and criminalization of these procedures

And insofar as AVMA positions and publications are concerned, the AVMA has relied heavily on these anti-cropping/anti-docking sources abroad as the basis upon which to predicate the change in position.

The addition of Dr. Emily Patterson-Kane in 2007 to the AVMA's Animal Welfare Division seems to have directly influenced the content of the papers published by the AVMA on the subject of cropping and tail docking.

Hired in 2007, Dr. Patterson-Kane, a New Zealand native, holds a PhD in animal psychology from Victoria University in Wellington. Her research interests include human judgments of animal welfare. Dr. Patterson-Kane sees her mission as one that brings change to the AVMA.

"I guess I understand that I have my position on animal welfare issues, and the AVMA has theirs. I came on board to be part of a shift within the AVMA that reflects and promotes a shift in the veterinary profession …"

- Dr. Emily Patterson-Kane,
Dolittler: ***An interview with AVMA animal welfare insider Emily Patterson-Kane, PhD***

Dr. Patterson-Kane works as a member of the three-person team on AVMA's Animal Welfare Division, directed by Dr Gail Golab, the very same division which is directly responsible for the preparation of the AVMA's publications, *Welfare Implications of Dogs: Tail Docking*, and *AVMA FAQ's: Tail Docking*, which contain arguably misleading information and citations.

Of note – there is not a single U.S. based study or paper amongst the AVMA citations, most of which rely heavily upon those by animal rights activists veterinarians in the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

We also note that Dr. W. Ron DeHaven, CEO, and Dr. Gail Golab, Animal Welfare Division, were among "*more than 400 veterinarians, government officials, humane group representatives, and industry representatives who met to discuss animal welfare standards"* at the second global animal welfare conference of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) held in Cairo, Egypt, as reported in the December 15, 2008 *JAVMA News*.

Is the AVMA sacrificing sound science in the drive for global harmonization?

The drive for the globalization of animal welfare is evident. The American Rottweiler Club fully supports initiatives to improve animal welfare, but rejects the importation of animal rights philosophy under the guise of animal welfare.

AVMA HOD Resolution 4 – Same Intent, Different Language

Recognizing the inherent flaws of the current AVMA cropping and docking policy, the Utah Veterinary Medical Association offered the following formal resolution to re-revise the language of the AVMA position of Ear Cropping and Tail Docking, as reported in the June 15, 2009 edition of *JAVMA News*:

Revise Policy on Ear Cropping and Tail Docking of Dogs

"RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) revise the AVMA policy on Ear Cropping and Tail Docking of Dogs as indicated below (deletions are ~~struckthrough~~ and additions are underlined):"

Ear Cropping and Tail Docking of Dogs

~~The AVMA opposes ear cropping and tail docking of dogs when done solely for cosmetic purposes.~~ Although cosmetic ear cropping and tail docking of dogs has little or no therapeutic basis, it is a procedure that is condoned by the American Kennel Club and by many members of society. It is imperative that the procedures be performed by trained, licensed, and caring veterinarians using current standard of care. The AVMA encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking ~~from~~ in breed standards. Members of the AVMA will conform to all state mandates concerning the procedures.

Resolution 4 gives the HOD a chance to weigh in on the recently revised AVMA policy. In November 2008, the Executive Board amended the policy to state that the AVMA opposes these procedures when done solely for cosmetic purposes. In addition, the amended policy encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking from breed standards.

The Utah VMA proposes amending the policy to, among other things, retract AVMA opposition to the procedures.

The Utah VMA writes in the resolution background that the Executive Board action was made without input from the HOD. The board was within its purview to do so, but the revised policy took a "much more hard line slant" than earlier iterations on the matter, which included warnings about the risks of cosmetic ear crops and tail docks, the Utah VMA wrote.

Society has mixed feelings about the ***procedures, which are minor surgeries, relatively safe, and cause little discomfort to the animals,*** *the Utah VMA continued. Moreover, public demand for ear crops and tail docks is high, and many AVMA members continue performing the procedures.*

"The issue for the AVMA is not to decide what surgery pet owners want or do not want for their pets, but rather to be sure all surgical procedures performed by licensed veterinarians are with proper protocol and proper postoperative care," the association wrote.

Veterinarians are not compelled to perform the procedures, the Utah VMA added, and the resolution indicates only that these procedures should be performed by licensed professionals who are willing and able to do them.

AVMA HOD Resolution 4 – Same Intent, Different Language – cont'd.

The American Rottweiler Club is in agreement with the Utah VMA on the following points:

- **That cropping or docking procedures are minor surgeries, relatively safe, and cause little discomfort to the animals**
- **Many AVMA members continue performing the procedures**
- **The issue for the AVMA is not to decide what surgery pet owners want or do not want for their pets**
- **Veterinarians are not compelled to perform the procedures**

In actuality, **AVMA HOD Resolution 4 is nothing more than doublespeak or "smoke and mirrors**" – a .diversion designed to appease critics – it contains nearly identical language and carries the same intent of the AVMA policy - the elimination and criminalization of ear cropping and tail docking.

1.	**UTAH VMA**	***"Although cosmetic ear cropping and tail docking of dogs has little or no therapeutic basis".***
	ISSUE:	**HOD Resolution 4 leaves intact the de facto definition that such procedures are merely "cosmetic" and hold little or no therapeutic value.**
2.	**UTAH VMA**	***"it is a procedure that is condoned by the American Kennel Club and by many members of society".***
	ISSUE	**HOD Resolution 4 marginalizes the procedures through use of the word "condoned".**
3.	**UTAH VMA**	***"It is imperative that the procedures be performed by trained, licensed, and caring veterinarians using current standard of care".***
	ISSUE	**HOD Resolution 4, left open to interpretation by an uninformed public or policymakers – will exclude skilled and knowledgeable laypeople and leave puppies at risk due to lack of understanding.**
4.	**UTAH VMA**	***"The AVMA encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking ~~from~~ in breed standards."***
	ISSUE	**HOD Resolution 4 STILL supports the AVMA position of the elimination of all ear cropping and tail docking.**
5.	**UTAH VMA**	***"Members of the AVMA will conform to all state mandates concerning the procedures".***
	ISSUE	**HOD Resolution 4 still provides the basis for and supports the criminalization and prosecution of veterinarians who perform these procedures.**

Legal, Moral & Ethical Considerations For The AVMA

The impact of the AVMA's revised position on ear cropping and tail docking is fraught with issues, and leaves open the real questions about the responsibility the AVMA must bear for the intended or unintended consequences which will result.

There are also numerous legal, moral and ethical considerations which seem to have been ignored.

With all due respect, and considering the absolute fact that *no data-driven science exists* to support the AVMA's revised position on cropping and docking, we ask the AVMA and the Animal Welfare Committee to answer the following questions:

A. Is it ethical for a science-based organization such as the AVMA to base policy on a lack of data-driven science? What does this bode for the future of the organization, its membership and pet owners?

B. Does the AVMA have a moral obligation to uphold the tenets of science, or will the AVMA bow to popular opinion or politically correct philosophy to drive other policy decisions as well?

C. What are the potential legal ramifications of AVMA policy based on the opinions of animal rights extremists rather than data-driven science?

The Future Of Our Breed

What is the future of the Rottweiler and the future of all cropped or docked breeds?

In revising policy to define ALL crop/dock procedures as "*cosmetic*" and in doing so, clearly using citations that a) lack any empirical research and b) are drawn from sources that support the animal rights agenda, the AVMA has signaled support to see these procedures defined as animal cruelty or even torture – and ownership of cropped or docked dogs defined as a criminal offense.

As one of its primary functions, the American Rottweiler Club is charged with safeguarding the Rottweiler breed and the breed standard, and upholding high standards of animal welfare and care for our dogs.

We cannot allow the future of the Rottweiler, or our breed standard, to be rewritten by the AVMA, in the context of policies clearly lacking empirical support, yet call for the elimination of tail docking in our breed. Nor can we allow special interest organizations to dictate legislation, with the help of the AVMA under the guise of this biased policy.

Should the AVMA continue to follow the lead of animal rights activists calling for anti-cropping/anti-docking legislation in UK, Australia and New Zealand, and the EU, then the very future of our breed - and all cropped or docked breeds - is at stake.

Equally concerning is the AVMA globalization strategy, which seeks to align policy and position with policies in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the EU.

Following the successful passage of anti-cropping, anti-docking legislation and policy, animal rights campaigners in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and the EU have now moved on to attacking breeding practices as cruel and inhumane.

We must wonder, then, if supporting such positions is in fact laying the foundation for the future of the AVMA, one in which the purposeful breeding of dogs would be considered cruel and/or inhumane.

If this is to be the case, the future ownership of pets, and indeed all animals, is at stake.

The Future Of The AVMA

In the past, the American Veterinary Medical Association has been an institution which has facilitated the profession of veterinary medicine, and has acted as the repository of thought, research and analysis based in science.

To quote AVMA CEO, Dr. W. Ron DeHaven,

> *"Among the most important responsibilities that veterinarians have in development and implementation of animal welfare standards is to **ensure those standards are science-based** and that consideration has been given to interactions among the various components of animal care systems."*

We couldn't agree more with Dr. DeHaven – animal welfare standards MUST be science-based.

However, we must share our concern that if, by sending science-based standards to the wayside in favor of political correctness, AVMA policies are to be incrementally rewritten to support and advance the animal rights agenda, then the trust and esteem which was well-placed in the AVMA by our organization and others would be seriously undermined.

We feel strongly that the future of the AVMA must include an inalienable duty to ensure that policies and positions are based on a standard of fair and unbiased science.

Anything less undermines the confidence of all stakeholders and constituents in the objectivity of your organization.

Formal Request For Revision Of Tail Docking Policy

The American Rottweiler Club formally requests that the American Veterinary Medical Association immediately revise its current policy on tail docking.

This formal request for revision meets and exceeds the "*AVMA Guidelines For Response*", and is accompanied by the full scope of research and analysis of the literature concerning this issue, which clearly shows all such published papers lack the "data-based evidence" that the AVMA "requires" for policy revisions.

Furthermore, having conducted an intensive research study, we find that the AVMA has relied solely on the use of anecdotal opinions of contemporary animal rights extremists as well as the outdated, historical references illegitimately used to convey the inference that the AVMA relied on "science" to support its position – science which *does not exist*.

The American Rottweiler Club rejects the categorization of tail docking as "cosmetic" surgery, as well as future criminalization of the procedure or the ownership of docked dogs.

We therefore respectfully request that the AVMA reconsider and review its most recent revision to its Tail Docking Policy, based on the information presented herein, including but not limited to:

- **the lack of empirical data to support the position**
- **the use of anecdotal opinion**
- **the sources cited by the AVMA in support of this new revision are overwhelmingly from animal rights campaigners in other countries who have led the anti-crop/dock movement abroad, resulting in the criminalization of the procedures and criminalization of ownership of cropped or docked dogs**

The American Rottweiler Club urges the American Veterinary Medical Association, and the esteemed members of the Animal Welfare Committee, and the Executive Board, to act appropriately and responsibly, using data-driven science to develop or revise positions which so greatly influence the members of the public, the press, and policymakers.

Welfare Implications of

Dogs: Tail Docking

(October 13, 2008)

THE ISSUE

Some dog breed standards and traditions specify or allow the amputation of part of a dog's tail. Cosmetic surgery is generally not allowed to be performed on show dogs, but tail docking is an exception for breeds for which this is customary. In the United States the tails of dogs belonging to these breeds are often docked, in both working and pet situations.

DOCKING

Puppies' tails are docked during the first five days of life, either surgically or with a constricting band.

WELFARE CONCERNS—RISKS

The welfare issues surrounding tail docking have been extensively reviewed,[1,2,3,4] but the practice has been the subject of very few controlled studies comparing otherwise equivalent dogs whose tails are docked or undocked.

Pain—Surgical amputation of the dog's tail produces behaviors indicative of short-term pain.[5]

Complications—As with any surgical procedure, there is potential for complications such as excessive bleeding, infection, and necrosis. Neuromas, which have been associated with chronic pain, may develop, but their incidence and persistence is not known.

Chronic Health Issues—It has been suggested that dogs whose tails are docked may have underdeveloped pelvic musculature; the evidence, however, is not conclusive. Dogs of breeds that are docked have a higher incidence of incontinence; however, this may be due to traits other than docked tails.[6] Dogs with docked tails within some breeds may have less well developed *levator ani* and *coccygeus* muscles.[7]

REASONS GIVEN FOR THE PRACTICE

Human Benefits—The primary reason for tail docking appears to be maintenance of a distinctive appearance for a particular breed, and to take part in an ongoing tradition. The value some communities place on docking may indirectly affect animal welfare if it motivates less skilled persons to carry out a procedure when a veterinarian refuses to perform that procedure, or if a dog whose tail is not docked is less able to be placed in a suitable home.

Animal Benefits—It has been suggested that docking protects the animal from later tail damage, in cases where the breed is more vulnerable or more likely to experience tail injury during its activities (e.g., breeds that hunt in thick cover and have vigorous tail action). Tail injuries generally have a low rate of occurrence[8] and many working breeds' tails go undocked. However, the German Shorthaired Pointer Breed Council collected breeder reports showing a high incidence of tail injury after the 1990 ban on docking in Sweden. It is possible that some breeds and uses are particularly vulnerable to tail trauma, but peer-reviewed data is lacking.

It has also been suggested that accidental tail trauma to the adult dog causes more suffering than amputation early in life. Although it is not currently accepted that puppies experience less pain than adult dogs, especially as analgesia is rarely provided for them, they can be docked quickly under controlled circumstances while fully restrained; this could minimize the chance for protracted suffering.

However, it has not been demonstrated that breeds whose tails are traditionally docked have a significant risk of tail trauma that would justify the docking of their tails.

TAIL DOCKING IN OTHER SPECIES

Tail docking is has performed for other species when not doing so results in these animals having a demonstrably high risk of suffering (e.g., fly strike in sheep, tail-biting in pigs). However, even for these species the procedure is gradually being considered to be less and less acceptable. Research into alternative solutions for these species is ongoing and not all facilities dock preventively. Docking became less favored for dairy cows and horses when justifications for the practice were deemed to be insufficient.

LEGISLATION AND ACCEPTABILITY

Across a range of countries routine docking is considered unacceptable by most veterinarians (83 to 92%[9,10]) and the general public (68 to 88%[11]). In contrast, many breeders with a prior commitment to this practice[12] remain in favor of tail docking (84 to 87%[13,]).

SUMMARY

Empirical studies of docking methods and the long-term consequences of docking that include a suitable population of control animals would be helpful in developing a consensus regarding the welfare implications of this procedure. However as veterinary and general public acceptance of the procedure appears to be low, and arguably declining, there is little impetus for further research. At this time routine tail docking has not been shown to produce demonstrable benefits for the typical dog. When it is performed routinely, rather than in response to a medical need (such as tail trauma), it is considered to be cosmetic surgery.

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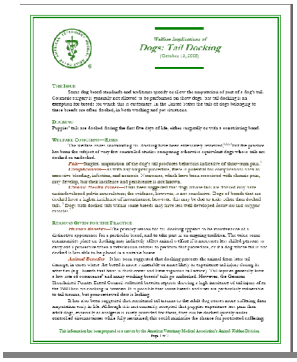

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Publication:	**AVMA Organization Website:**
Type Of Article:	**Data-Driven Study NO**
	Literature Review NO
	Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY

This AVMA document seems intended to present a balanced and scientific view of the cropping/docking issues and landscape. However – upon closer inspection, one finds this article fraught with deliberately misleading language, inconsistencies and obfuscation of the facts concerning cropping and docking.

By citing 13 specific references, the AVMA seems to back up its position as one based on science.

However, not one of the 13 citations contains any empirical evidence to support a prohibition on cropping or docking, and most citations are sourced from animal activists campaigning to ban tail docking or ear cropping in the UK, Australian and New Zealand.

Behavior such as this by a once respected organization can only lead to the breakdown of public trust, since the AVMA seems to have left behind science for the advancement of animal welfare based on facts, and now seems intent upon driving policy positions based on the politically correct philosophy of the radical animal rights agenda.

ARC AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

ANALYSIS

The opening paragraph of Tail Docking automatically defines tail docking as "Cosmetic surgery. By using the phrase, "*tail docking is an exception*", to the prohibition of cosmetic surgery on showdogs, the AVMA is stating that tail docking is indeed "cosmetic surgery".

> **THE ISSUE**
>
> Some dog breed standards and traditions specify or allow the amputation of part of a dog's tail. Cosmetic surgery is generally not allowed to be performed on show dogs, but tail docking is an exception for breeds for which this is customary. In the United States the tails of dogs belonging to these breeds are often docked, in both working and pet situations.

Notice the date of publication, October 13, 2008, which is a full month before the AVMA publicly announced its policy position change on ear cropping and tail docking.

Next, the AVMA states the welfare issues surrounding tail docking "have been extensively reviewed, which infers that the scientific community has published numerous studies regarding the procedure.

Yet, in the same sentence, the AVMA admits "the practice has been the subject of very few controlled studies", when in fact no studies have ever been conducted on this practice.

> **WELFARE CONCERNS—RISKS**
>
> The welfare issues surrounding tail docking have been extensively reviewed,[1,2,3,4] but the practice has been the subject of very few controlled studies comparing otherwise equivalent dogs whose tails are docked or undocked.
>
> **Pain—**Surgical amputation of the dog's tail produces behaviors indicative of short-term pain.[5]
> **Complications—**As with any surgical procedure, there is potential for complications such as excessive bleeding, infection, and necrosis. Neuromas, which have been associated with chronic pain, may develop, but their incidence and persistence is not known.
> **Chronic Health Issues—**It has been suggested that dogs whose tails are docked may have underdeveloped pelvic musculature; the evidence, however, is not conclusive. Dogs of breeds that are docked have a higher incidence of incontinence; however, this may be due to traits other than docked tails.[6] Dogs with docked tails within some breeds may have less well developed *levator ani* and *coccygeus* muscles.[7]

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

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- **Citation #1** refers to a 1992 article in the ***Australian*** *Veterinary Journal* by David Morton, seeking to support the enactment of anti-docking legislation. Mr. Morton, an **active animal rights campaigner and anti- sealer**, has been **lauded by the Humane Society of the United States**. HSUS has been the subject of deep criticism as it functions primarily as a lobbying group, and not a rescue, and spends the majority of its revenue on marketing campaigns to drive legislation.

- **Citation #2** refers to a 2003 **review of tail docking – not a scientific investigation** - published in the ***Australian*** *Veterinary Journal* by **anti-docking activists Bennett and Perini**.

- **Citation #3** refers to an **opinion paper unsubstantiated by scientific evidence** published by **Australian anti-docking activist R. Wansborough,** who admits that no studies exists that prove any harm to docked dogs.

- **Citation #4** refers to a **now-defunct** page on the UK DEFRA website (Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) – an article which contained a review of "scientific aspects and **veterinary opinion" on legislation banning tail docking** in the UK and supported by **animal rights extremists, including anti-sealer and anti-docking activist, D. Morton.**

- **Citation #5** refers to a 1996 paper that simply reports observations, and is NOT empirical, data-driven evidence, published in the *Applied Animal Behavior Science*.

- **Citation #6** refers to a 1996 article in the *United Kingdom Veterinary Record* entitled, "Association in bitches between breed, size, neutering and docking, and acquired urinary incontinence due to incompetence of the urethral sphincter mechanism. The risk of incontinence was extremely low, and no evidence has been produced in the U.S.

- **Citation #7** refers to an unproven doctoral thesis by a student at the University of Sydney, which is not available on the web.

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REASONS GIVEN FOR THE PRACTICE
Human Benefits—The primary reason for tail docking appears to be maintenance of a distinctive appearance for a particular breed, and to take part in an ongoing tradition. The value some communities place on docking may indirectly affect animal welfare if it motivates less skilled persons to carry out a procedure when a veterinarian refuses to perform that procedure, or if a dog whose tail is not docked is less able to be placed in a suitable home.
Animal Benefits—It has been suggested that docking protects the animal from later tail damage, in cases where the breed is more vulnerable or more likely to experience tail injury during its activities (e.g., breeds that hunt in thick cover and have vigorous tail action). Tail injuries generally have a low rate of occurrence[8] and many working breeds' tails go undocked. However, the German Shorthaired Pointer Breed Council collected breeder reports showing a high incidence of tail injury after the 1990 ban on docking in Sweden. It is possible that some breeds and uses are particularly vulnerable to tail trauma, but peer-reviewed data is lacking.
It has also been suggested that accidental tail trauma to the adult dog causes more suffering than amputation early in life. Although it is not currently accepted that puppies experience less pain than adult dogs, especially as analgesia is rarely provided for them, they can be docked quickly under controlled circumstances while fully restrained; this could minimize the chance for protracted suffering.

- **Citation #8** refers to a 1985 article in the ***United Kingdom*** *Veterinary Record* by three activists. The article was entitled, "*Association between tail injuries and docking in dogs*", which has been disputed by others – see the attached – and is also not data-driven evidence.

In the paragraph below, the AVMA deliberately infers that tail docking is considered unacceptable by most veterinarians and the public:

LEGISLATION AND ACCEPTABILITY
Across a range of countries routine docking is considered unacceptable by most veterinarians (83 to 92%[9,10]) and the general public (68 to 88%[11]). In contrast, many breeders with a prior commitment to this practice[12] remain in favor of tail docking (84 to 87%[13]).

The above section of this AVMA publication is misleading.

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The AVMA presents this information as if this was true in the United States and B) as if the AVMA had firsthand By presenting this in the context of being written by the AMVA itself – and presenting this in the contest of the United States,

The deception is that most readers would conclude that both the veterinary community AND the public – here in the UNITED STATES – view routine docking as "unacceptable" by large margins – 83 to 92% for vets and 68 to 88% for the public.

This is patently untrue. The survey percentages quoted by the AVMA above have NOTHING to do with any survey of the views of the veterinary community or the public in the United States, but instead, *refer to two highly disputed surveys in Australia and the UK*.

The AVMA writes that *"routine docking is considered unacceptable by most veterinarians (83 to 92%[9,10]) and the general public (68 to 88%[11]) refers to:*

- **Citation #9** refers to a 1996 article in the ***Australian*** *Veterinary Journal* by **three anti-docking activist vets**, seeking to support the enactment of anti-docking legislation. The article was entitled, "*Tail docking in dogs: a sample of attitudes of veterinarians and dog breeders in* ***Queensland***.

- **Citation #10** refers to a 1992 survey of a small sample **British** vets – just 25% of small animal vets - a survey which was highly contested by the UK's Council of Docked Breeds for being driven by **animal rights extremists at the RSPCA** http://www.cdb.org/vets/bsava.htm According to the UK Council of Docked Breeds, this sample was too narrow to accurately represent the views of the majority of vets in the UK.

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- **Citation #11** refers to another poll (highly contested by the NZ Council of Docked Breeds) **conducted by the vegan activists/animal rights extremists** at the **New Zealand** SPCA NZ SPCA (***Expose Animal Cruelty – Open Your Fridge*****)** which allegedly showed public support for a ban on tail docking in the 2005 document, "Submission to Government Administration Committee", another effort in to push through a tail docking ban in that country http://rnzspca.org.nz/images/stories/submissions/submission-taildocking_bill.pdf The sample size of the NZ SPCA survey is not mentioned, nor are any other survey details, (age, how/when/where conducted, survey demographics, etc.)

- **Citation #12** refers to a 2003 article by **Australian** anti-docking supporters Bennett and Perini in the ***Australian Veterinary Journal*** entitled, "*Tail docking in dogs: can attitude change be achieved?"* Neither Patricia Bennett nor E. Perini are vets, but psychologists.

- **Citation #13** refers to a survey by **UK** Council of Docked Breeds that is no longer available on the web.

This AVMA publication, *Welfare Implications of Dogs: Tail Docking* (Oct. 2008), was written and "*prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division*".

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Citation Reference:	**#1**	
Citation Title:	**Docking Of Dogs: practical and ethical aspects**	
Citation Author:	**Morton D. (Author)**	
Year Published:	**1992**	
Publication:	***Veterinary Record***	
Country:	**UK**	
Type Of Article:	**Results Of Data-Driven Study**	**NO**
	Literature Review	**YES**
	Author's Opinion	**YES**

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

This is an opinion paper by author David Morton, who, an as anti-docking activist in the UK, was a primary driver behind the passage of anti-cropping/anti-docking legislation banning and criminalizing the procedures in the UK.

Mr. Morton is also a well-known anti-sealer, animal rights activist who has been honored by HSUS – the Humane Society of the United States, for his "work".

19 he Veterinary Record, October 3, 1992

(6) pages

pecial Article

ocking of dogs: practical and thical aspects

t month, the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons will dis- the docking of dogs' tails, with a view to deciding whether docking for therapeutic purposes should be considered as prima-facie evidence of ceful professional conduct. Here, Professor David Morton considers the ents for and against tail docking, and the ethical issues involved.

NG the tails of dogs has been carried many centuries and like many other alterations it probably began as a preventing or reducing injury to ani- en they were being used by humans. he 19th century, reasons held to justi- g included: to produce bobtail pup- breeds such as the English sheepdog ng the parents (as Lamarck's theory red characteristics was still widely d); to prevent canine rabies as docked held less likely to develop rabies e undocked dogs, did not attract o strengthen the back; to increase prevent dogs being bitten when rat- hting; and to promote better sport and fighting.

docking would appear to be carried or reasons of human convenience e, or as a matter of tradition and he reasons commonly given are: dogs injuring themselves while shooting, hunting or guarding; the appearance of a particular

rs fear that it would be lt to sell undocked of breeds that are tomarily docked'

to make an animal look more more attractive, or better bal- mote better hygiene, and to cohabit more harmoniously fined living conditions.

vel, reporting on 520 submis- New Zealand Ministry of fisheries, cites other reasons a tail could be a disadvan- a tail helps differentiation and a terrier; docking is ge in a war; a docked tail by rats; docking helps mat- nd the early detection of er tails are easier to grip but when terriers are being docked dogs have better anoeuvrability; as tails are ng mechanism docking purpose; the weight of a the spine; and the cages dogs would no longer be were banned.

ders fear that it would be docked puppies of breeds ly docked, as there has been a general acceptance of the appearance of docked breeds. Thus, both commercial aspects and the life of unsold puppies have to be considered, as well as the numbers involved.

ead of the department of and biomedical ethics at mingham

Functions of the tail

A dog's tail is thought to function as an organ of balance and be used for communication with other dogs and animals, including humans. It is also used to mark out territory by means of the anpracaudal scent gland and the anal glands on defecation. While the removal of a tail could affect balance, animals appear to compensate and adapt remarkably well.

The position of the tail and the way it is moved, together with body stance, can signal pleasure, friendliness, dominance, playfulness, unhappiness, poor wellbeing, defensiveness, inquisitiveness, aggression, nervousness and submissiveness, as well as being used for other characteristic breed stances such as pointing. Thus, amputation could affect interaction with other animals and man, and some who study canine behaviour have suggested that the absence of a tail can predispose an animal to show unwarranted aggression to other dogs and man, or be the victim of attacks by other dogs through a failure to communicate.

Comparison with other procedures

Comparisons are often made between docking dogs and other procedures such as docking lambs, spaying bitches, castrating cats, trimming beaks and so on. However, before making such comparisons the evidence has to be sifted and the underlying practical and moral reasons defined. One basis for a humanitarian moral viewpoint is that pain and suffering should be caused to an animal only when it is necessary, that is, humans have an obligation not to cause animals unnecessary or avoidable suffering. The following six criteria could be used as a test of 'necessity' for the removal or modification of any part of any animal in any way:

– Is there adequate evidence that leaving the animals intact predisposes them to harmful consequences?

– Is there compelling evidence that the proposed interference is in the best interests of those animals in that it would confer some benefit?

– Would the harmful consequence or the benefit occur in a significant proportion of animals?

– Does the proposed interference cause a greater harm than the damage one is trying to prevent?

– Is there another way with no, or fewer, adverse effects that would achieve the same end?

– Is the increase in 'value' as a result of carrying out the proposed interference (for example, commercial, social, scientific, educational) sufficient to offset the harm done to the animals?

View of the veterinary profession

The veterinary profession seems to have opposed docking for many years, not only on the grounds of it causing unnecessary suffering, but particularly because of the methods used to carry out the operation. Youatt wrote the following passage in 1839 in a book he wrote for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty entitled 'The Obligation and Extent of Humanity to Brutes':

'Then the tail of the dog does not suit the fancy of the owner. It must be shortened in some of these animals, and taken off altogether in others. If the sharp, strong scissors, with a ligature, were used, the operation, although still indefensible, would not be a very cruel one, for the tail may be removed almost in a moment, and the wound soon heals; but for the beastly gnawing off of the part – and the act of drawing out the tendons and the nerves – these are the acts of a cannibal; and he who perpetrates a barbarity so nearly approaching cannibalism deserves to be scouted from all society.'

Some veterinary surgeons carry out the procedure arguing that 'it would be worse for the animals if they did not'. Breeders do not always have the training or knowledge to dock aseptically, nor do they necessarily know how, or have the equipment, to deal with unpredictable side effects. Despite there being a financial inducement for veterinarians to carry out docking, the profession on the whole is against the procedure. A survey of the Australian Veterinary Association (New South Wales) in 1989 found that 86 per cent of questionnaire respondents opposed non-therapeutic docking and described it as 'archaic', 'barbaric' and 'pointless'.

In 1992, a similar questionnaire survey was carried out by the UK British Small Animal Veterinary Association with similar

'Despite there being a financial inducement for veterinarians to carry out docking, the profession on the whole is against the procedure'

results. The questionnaire was sent out to more than 3300 veterinary surgeons of whom 2214 (67 per cent) replied. Ninety-two per cent agreed with the ban and 56 per cent said they refused to dock at present; 88 per cent agreed with the current RCVS view that docking is an unnecessary mutilation and unethical, but felt that the procedure should be banned by the Government. While some might argue that only 40 per cent of practis-

ing veterinary surgeons replied (based on August 1992 figures from the RCVS practice database), the BSAVA's members are those specifically involved in small animal practice and, therefore, most likely to be asked to carry out docking.

Under UK law it may be possible for veterinary nurses to dock puppies' tails legally as an act of minor surgery, providing it were done under veterinary direction. The British Veterinary Nursing Association has drawn up a questionnaire with a view to canvassing members' opinions and producing a policy statement on the issue. It would seem unlikely that their view would differ markedly from those of their veterinary surgeon colleagues.

Position of the RCVS

As things stand the RCVS has declared that docking a dog's tail is an 'unnecessary mutilation' and therefore cannot be ethically correct unless it is for a therapeutic purpose, that is, the purpose is in the interests and wellbeing of that dog *at that time* (my emphasis). Moreover, there is adequate evidence that the view of the profession, both in the UK and in other member states of the EC, is that it is unethical to dock dogs. To date, the RCVS has stated that until docking is made illegal it will not take action against one of its members carrying out this procedure, despite having declared the procedure unethical and an 'unjustified mutilation'.

The RCVS has a duty to uphold the ethical standards required of the profession and to ensure that veterinarians keep the oath they undertake on qualifying to endeavour to protect the welfare of animals in their care. In the case of docking, the RCVS may take the view that until evidence is available which confirms that leaving tails on dogs is not in their best interests, and there is no realistic alternative, then the profession has a duty to ensure that animals are given the benefit of the doubt. Furthermore, the Royal College has a legal and ethical duty to its members, to the animals under their care and to the general public to ensure that the standards of the profession are maintained. Consequently, a failure of the RCVS to discipline a member over an ethical issue could lead to others questioning the RCVS's commitment to its obligations and responsibilities.

In 1988, the UK Government was asked to sign the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Pet Animals, which allows member states to enter a derogation permitting docking (see below). Rather than seeking to outlaw tail-docking in this manner, the Government instead amended Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. This ensures that, after July 1, 1993, only a qualified person, that is, a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, will be allowed to dock dogs. Thus, there is now greater pressure on the RCVS Council to decide whether, if a member carries out the operation for a non-therapeutic purpose, such action may be considered prima facie evidence of conduct disgraceful in a professional respect, as only in this way will the Government's objective be achieved.

View of the UK Kennel Club and dog breeders

Under Kennel Club rules docking is optional for any of the 47 docked breeds, that is, it is not required to conform to any breed standard. While breeders might [illegible] should be optional, many consider [illegible] ing is in the interests of the animal?

Various pro-docking organisat[illegible] been set up to defend the breeder's [illegible] continue to dock (though the mor[illegible] them claiming this 'right' is not cle[illegible] Council of Docked Breeds (whic[illegible] seded the Council for Docked Breed[illegible] edly has around 3000 members and [illegible] represent 130 docked breed clu[illegible] numbers have increased dramatically [illegible] past few months as some breeders f[illegible] ban on docking is only the first of a [illegible] measures that will affect all breeds [illegible] trolling other activities associated [illegible] breeding.

Out of a total of 252,524 pupp[illegible] tered with the UK Kennel Club [illegible] 79,205 (31·4 per cent) were puppie[illegible] tionally docked breeds, and it can [illegible] be assumed that they were all doc[illegible] dog population has been calculate[illegible] around 7·3 million but includes so[illegible] pedigree dogs which will also be [illegible] (such as the terrier crosses). Howe[illegible] number of undocked dogs will signi[illegible] exceed the number docked.

Some breeders have felt so strongl[illegible] their right to continue docking that th[illegible] threatened to remove their custom fro[illegible] docking veterinary surgeons. It might b[illegible] tinent, therefore, to evaluate the im[illegible] such an event by comparing the nu[illegible] professional breeders of pedigree dogs [illegible] the total number of dog owners, that is [illegible] potential veterinary clientele.

Professional breeders are estimated b[illegible] Kennel Club to number around 60,00[illegible] those breeding docked breeds would [illegible] ably be a maximum of 7000 (this [illegible] assumes no breeders dock their own [illegible] and that each breeder registers an aver[illegible] 10 puppies per year). The number of [illegible] owners, on the other hand, who keep [illegible] simply as companion or pet animal[illegible] several million. The impact, then, of a b[illegible] er boycott on the average veterinary pra[illegible] would appear to be two to three breeder[illegible] practice (there are fewer than 2000 prac[illegible] in the UK treating small animals). Most [illegible] owners and many breeders might well acc[illegible] undocked animals and would not enter su[illegible] boycott; in any event a veterinary prac[illegible] provides far more services than docking [illegible] odd puppies per year.

The docked and the undocked: two boxers at play (Photograph by Sally Anne Thompson)

European Convention

To date, the European Convention f[illegible] Protection of Pet Animals has been sign[illegible] 12 countries (Belgium, Denmark, Fi[illegible] Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, [illegible] Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sw[illegible] Switzerland), with Belgium, Denm[illegible] Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, [illegible] Netherlands and Portugal entering a reser[illegible] tion on docking. Article 10 of the Convent[illegible] on surgical operations states:

> 'Surgical operations for the purpose of modi[illegible] fying the appearance of a pet animal or for other non-curative purposes shall be prohibited and [illegible] in particular: the docking of tails; the cropping [illegible] of ears; devocalisation; the declawing and [illegible] defanging.
>
> 'Exceptions to these prohibitions shall be per[illegible] mitted only: if a veterinarian considers non-

curative procedures necessary either for veterinary medical reasons or for the benefit of any particular animal; or to prevent reproduction.

'Operations in which the animal will or is likely to experience severe pain shall be carried out under anaesthesia only by a veterinarian or under his supervision. Operations for which no anaesthesia is required may be carried out by a person competent under national legislation.'

The accompanying Explanatory Report states:

'The article has been worded so as to place emphasis on the prohibition of surgical interventions which are mainly carried out for aesthetic reasons or for the personal convenience of the owner and/or the breeder.'

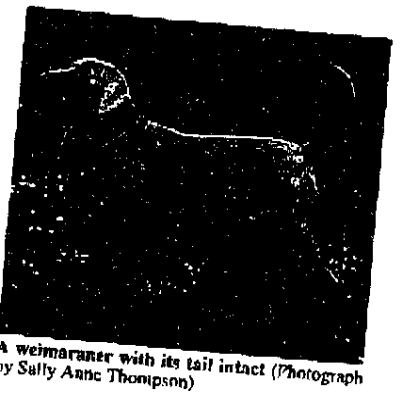
drawing up conventions of this sort, all participating governments send delegates to part in the discussions and approve the ding of each clause before a convention put up for signature. No government could , therefore, that it was not well aised of the likely consequences. At ent, the UK Government has not signed Convention and still has the option to ban cking directly by not entering a derogation. eed, it is clear from the report of the UK liament Second Standing Committee on atory Instruments on May 21, 1991, that

On the basis of feeling pain, we may have an extra responsibility to protect young animals'

gh the amendments made to the inary Surgeons Act 1966, the ernment fully intends to prohibit tail ation in puppies. As Mr David can, then Parliamentary Secretary to the ry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, The Government have taken the step considerable thought and for several , which together convinced me that tine mutilation of dogs in that way g) has become an anachronism.'

Maclean explained that the ernment had consulted widely before g a decision and had held meetings Kennel Club, the RCVS, the Council ed Breeds and others. He concluded was no longer justified to cut off a tail. 'We have considered carefully it is necessary for any dogs to have e removed routinely and we have no persuasive arguments.'

overnment (Home Office) did not achieve its aim of a ban on docking time consuming primary legislation, the same end could be achieved by g Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Act 1966 (a MAFF responsibility) to the exemption for lay persons (that veterinary surgeons) to carry out in dogs. The Government was fully 1987 that the RCVS had declared the of a puppy's tail an 'unnecessary n' and that the Royal College had ed the matter of disciplinary action backed off taking any action as dock- not illegal. The situation will have little if, despite the sentiments by the minister, the UK nt enters a reservation on Article 10, as then a docking ban will only be achieved in practice through the veterinary profession (the RCVS) taking action against its members who dock dogs for non-therapeutic purposes. Thus the Government's actions will only stop docking indirectly and only then if the RCVS stands by its ethical commitment. This has had the unfortunate repercussion of leaving some dog breeders to feel that it is the actions of the veterinary profession, and not the Government, which are to blame.



A weimaraner with its tail intact (Photograph by Sally Anne Thompson)

Procedure for docking puppies

The tail is a complex anatomical structure formed from around 15 to 20 coccygeal vertebrae with synovial joints strengthened by ligaments which permit limited movement in all directions. A complex arrangement of muscles and tendons with precise insertions and origins, cause and control movements of the tail. All these structures are supplied by arteries, veins and nerves.

Docking describes the surgical process by which varying lengths of the tail are removed using instruments such as scissors, scalpel, razor or knife, elastic bands or rubber rings. The precise technique will vary according to the knowledge, competence and experience of the operator. It is usually carried out when the animals are in the first few days of life, but if carried out later than 10 days must be performed by a veterinary surgeon and with the use of an anaesthetic.

Normally, no surgical precision is involved in cutting or crushing the tail; it is simply the length that matters. In some breeds greater accuracy is required, with specific joints being indicated. The use of an anaesthetic in puppies is uncommon and afterwards the stump may be stitched or treated with an antiseptic powder. Rarely are anaesthetics or analgesics given either locally or systemically.

It is not uncommon for professional breeders to dock their own litters as well as those of amateur breeders. However, the conditions under which the procedure is carried out are often unsatisfactory. These persons have little training in aseptic surgical technique, nor are they always aware of the potential adverse consequences of docking and how to avoid them. Some consider that docking by means of rubber rings is safer and more humane but the evidence in lambs and goat kids is that it, too, is painful, giving rise to raised plasma cortisol levels and behaviour indicative of pain for at least two hours afterwards.

It is generally agreed that puppies usually squeal and squeak when the tail is cut off without anaesthetic (in a BVA AWF survey, one veterinary nurse described it as 'unconsolable squealing'). The only study of puppies before and after docking known to the author was carried out by a family which bred cocker spaniels and was reported in the newspaper *Dog World* (May 22, 1987). The puppies' activities such as feeding, sleeping and crying and whether the bitch was in a box with her puppies, were recorded for four hours before, and five hours after, docking. The following responses to docking were noted (expressed in terms of the number of puppies carrying out a particular activity every hour). All the puppies squealed when their tail was cut off and there was an increase in the amount of time puppies spent crying (0·29 puppies cried per hour before, compared with 3·8 puppies after docking). There was a decrease in the amount of time puppies spent feeding (4·86 versus 4·0 puppies per hour) and sleeping (8·57 versus 5·56 puppies per hour) after docking.

From a scientific point of view it would have been better to have had some undocked puppies as controls so that other factors could also have been assessed. Nevertheless, the data in this limited study provides obvious evidence for pain at the time of docking and some useful pointers for further observations.

Recognition of pain

As most opposition to docking centres around the issue of inflicting unnecessary pain upon an animal, it would seem relevant to look at this aspect in more detail. Pain is an essential characteristic of higher vertebrates including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibia and fish. Its perception alerts an animal to potential or actual injury and helps prevent further damage.

Pain sensors are mainly located in the skin and often this would be the first part of the body to be exposed to an external threat. These sensors are specialised nerve endings (nociceptors) and respond to excessive pressure, or excessive heat or chemical stimulus. Nerve impulses are generated and travel at great speed to the central nervous system where they are 'converted' into a 'feeling' of pain or discomfort by the cerebral cortex. By and large, the greater the stimulus, the greater the frequency and magnitude of the impulses, and the more pain is felt. The nerve fibres which transmit impulses from these receptors may be myelinated or non-myelinated, which leads simply to differences in the speed of impulse conduction. The nerve fibres that supply the muscles to coordinate reflex escape movements are separate from those used for sensation, and are normally myelinated and transmit impulses even faster.

Sudden or substantial pain is usually associated with an immediate rapid withdrawal of the affected part, often followed by some 'escape' response from the pain. This immediate withdrawal reflex is not associated with pain, but an escape response that persists, for example, continual movements, or whimpering, can provide strong evidence that an animal is still feeling substantial pain.

While the nervous system of some young animals is not fully mature at birth, as some

nerves are not completely myelinated, this does not mean that the nerves that conduct painful impulses are not present, but rather their speed of conduction is slower than in mature animals. Furthermore, many pain perceiving nerves in mature animals are unmyelinated. This difference in the speed of conduction means a puppy will perceive pain roughly a quarter of a second later than a mature animal.

Perhaps of more concern is that current research suggests that the immaturity of the central nervous system of young animals makes them more likely to feel pain than adults. This is because pathways known to inhibit pain perception in adults have not fully developed. Consequently, on the basis of feeling pain, we may actually have an extra responsibility to protect young animals.

In animals that are blind, such as young puppies for a few days after birth, withdrawal movements may appear to lack direction and coordination. A similar picture is seen in human infants when they are in pain (for example, gripes, burns, crushed fingers): their reactions are also uncoordinated, they make a lot of noise but the essential components of the nervous system are present and few would deny that babies feel pain.

In summary, the tail of a puppy is as anatomically capable of pain perception as that of an adult, and the immaturity of the nervous system cannot be interpreted as the animal not being able to feel pain. In addition, it should be remembered that an animal's emotions such as pleasure, fear and so on, are expressed by tail movements and these are removed to varying degrees in docked animals.

A German view

Professor Dr R. Fritsch submitted evidence to the German Kennel Club on docking which apparently was influential in forming the German government's views before it signed the Convention and entered a derogation on docking. The evidence highlighted three key issues: speed of response; ineffective reaction to pain; and whether 'serious' pain was caused. Speed of conduction and ineffective reactions have already been discussed but the question of 'serious pain' is interesting.

Dr Fritsch did not deny that some pain occurred but suggested that it was not great and, therefore, of little concern. The question of whether humans should be the sole arbiter of whether the pain is of concern must be addressed. Given a choice it seems likely the animal itself would prefer to avoid the operation.

Adverse effects after docking

Improper docking can lead to infection and necrosis of the stump. In most cases infection is due to faulty technique but is adequately coped with by the puppy's natural defences; however, in extreme cases infection can ascend the spinal canal and affect the central nervous system. This is more likely to occur in neonatal animals than in adults, as the spinal cord extends further down the vertebral column.

Tails that are docked both properly and improperly can develop neuromata, a response of injured nerves which may lead to chronic pain and self-mutilation, both of which have been reported following tail amputation. Where the tail is cut very short (as, for example, in the old English sheepdog), additional adverse effects may result due to the deep excision, for example, damage to the underlying structures such as the anal sphincter. Haemorrhage is also an unwanted side effect; it may become uncontrollable in lines which carry a blood clotting defect and has led to the death of animals.

Despite the opinions of some opponents of docking, there appears to be no published evidence that tail docking is associated with perineal hernias; or that tail chasing in dobermann pinschers and boxers is due to phantom limb (tail) pain; or that dogs with very short tails (eg. boxers and rottweilers) may be more susceptible to vertebral spondylosis due to the manner in which they 'wag' their backs; or that docked dogs are more likely to suffer from anal gland impaction.

'Given the choice, it seems likely the animal itself would prefer to avoid the operation'

Arguments for docking

The main arguments for preserving docking of puppies revolve around its being a prophylactic measure; that if required therapeutically it would be a more severe operation in an older dog; that it promotes good hygiene; that it reduces damage in the home; and that it improves the looks of an animal.

Docking as a preventive measure

Perhaps it would hardly ever be necessary to dock a dog therapeutically were it not for accidental injury or infection, sometimes as a direct result of our 'use' of animals. Some sporting dogs, notably gundogs such as spaniels, weimaraners, vizlas and German pointers injure their tails when they are used for hunting and shooting in close cover. Docking may reduce the chance of damage as, with a reduction in length, there is less risk of briars becoming tangled in the tail fur and causing such damage. An alternative explanation proposed by the Federation of Hunting Associations is that short tails are less likely to be damaged because they develop less velocity than long tails, and so there is less risk of damage when they hit a solid object.

Comment. – The complete removal of the tail would obviously be a successful preventive measure as it would eliminate all risk of injury. In practice, the tail is shortened by varying amounts based on the experience built up over generations of breeders and no doubt the varying lengths of docked tails (30 per cent and 80 per cent of the tail is removed according to the breed in sporting dogs) are a true result of a combination of both practical and aesthetic aspects. However, it has to be noted that the English pointer is no[illegible] whereas the German pointer is, and [illegible] show springer spaniel has the tail do[illegible] two thirds whereas the working spri[illegible] it docked by only one third. 'Pre[illegible] docking, therefore, may contain a sub[illegible] thetic element.

Not all tail injuries in adult dogs [illegible] tail amputation and so docking may li[illegible] a prophylactic against only minor tra[illegible] such as application of ointment, bandi[illegible] even natural healing.

Can preventive docking be justifie[illegible] so few animals are likely to be injur[illegible] say, more than 80 per cent of animals [illegible] a particular sporting breed were li[illegible] require therapeutic intervention at a l[illegible] then it might be possible to make ou[illegible] for docking. But of all those dogs bo[illegible] a minority go hunting, and then only [illegible] proportion of those are likely to dam[illegible] tails (perhaps less than 0·1 per cent o[illegible] born?). Is it right that 100 per cent of [illegible] a particular breed should undergo tail[illegible] tation for the sake of that 0·1 per cent?

A utilitarian analysis might sugge[illegible] the total amount of suffering caused by [illegible] therapeutic docking of all puppies of [illegible] ceptible breed was likely to be great[illegible] the suffering of the few requiring a the[illegible] tic operation later on. So docking cou[illegible] be justified on the basis of the greates[illegible] for the greatest number. Furthermo[illegible] pain caused by a therapeutic operation c[illegible] justified as being entirely in the interest [illegible] that animal and, unlike non-therapeutic d[illegible] ing, any pain could be reduced through [illegible] use of anaesthetics and postoperative [illegible] gesics, to a point where it should be rela[illegible] ly insignificant.

By a similar analysis, would the be[illegible] gained from all dogs having a tail (in [illegible] of communication, balance, less pain a[illegible] on) outweigh the disadvantage of the [illegible] number of dogs that have to be docked th[illegible] peutically?

If the reason for docking dogs is to pre[illegible] tail damage, then one might have expe[illegible] some pressure from breeders to dock g[illegible] dancs, greyhounds, wolfhounds [illegible] labradors, as dogs in these breeds someti[illegible] have to be docked for therapeutic reasons.

An effective alternative to docking [illegible] many working dogs to prevent injury [illegible] be to trim the 'feather' off the tail, as is d[illegible] with the ears and feet. This helps to avoid [illegible] fur becoming tangled with briars, burrs [illegible] so on, when dogs are required to wor[illegible] close cover and thicket. Humans coul[illegible] course, avoid working dogs where the[illegible] likely to injure themselves.

One might predict that, within a b[illegible] docked dogs would suffer far fewer [illegible] injuries than undocked dogs. This has [illegible] impossible to investigate as such a [illegible] proportion of members of docked breeds [illegible] routinely docked shortly after bir[illegible] Nevertheless, in a survey at Edinbur[illegible] records were examined on all dogs attendi[illegible] a clinic between 1965 and 1985 and analys[illegible] for any association between tail injuries an[illegible] docking. Of those animals with tail injuries [illegible] 83 per cent had not been docked. However [illegible] this figure has to be related to the number o[illegible] undocked animals attending the clinic, which [illegible] was 78 per cent. Overall, it was found tha[illegible] 0·31 per cent of docked dogs had tail injuries

compared with 0·41 per cent in undocked dogs. The authors concluded that docking could not be recommended as a prophylactic measure. A recent Swedish survey found that 3 per cent of tail injuries were in undocked animals but they did not relate their figures to the proportion of undocked to docked dogs then, an essential prerequisite before any conclusion can be drawn.

Until it is possible to establish accurate figures for tail injuries in docked and undocked dogs, together with the circumstances (for example, whether the injuries occurred in the home or during field work) comment on factual grounds is unlikely. It would be important, for example, to obtain

Some sporting dogs injure their tails when they are used for hunting and shooting in close cover . . . An effective alternative to docking in many working dogs to prevent injury might be to trim the 'feather' off the tail

...s on the incidence and prevalence of injuries in docked breeds before and after docking ban. In Sweden where there has been a ban for over two years, the Association of Animal Clinics was asked to give information on the number of dogs with tail damage and the number of clinics involved; 27 of the 33 member clinics replied. The response showed that 31 out of ...ases of tail damage (27 per cent) were previously docked breeds and that at least ... died of gangrene of the spine resulting from injuries to their undocked tails. However, more data are needed to put those figures in perspective; for example, what was the incidence of tail damage and these complications before tail docking was banned; what was the proportion of docked to undocked breeds seen at these clinics; did the injuries take place in or out of the hunting season; were the causes of the injuries, etc?

...as a more severe operation in the ...

Not all tail injuries in adult dogs require tail amputation it is required in ... so the question arises whether it is ...l to amputate the tail of a puppy ...dult. In fact, there may be three ...when an adult dog may be docked: ...ures its tail sufficiently severely to ...mputation for a variety of reasons; ... animal which was docked as a ... to be redocked as an adult because ...mical failure (for example, proud-...obermanns); and when an undocked ... exported to a country where it is ... to dock dogs of that breed.

... – This raises several new issues. It ...e the operation is far less traumatic ... and, unlike in adults, no anaesthet-...ired. But given the concerns dis-...p304 about increased pain suscep-... the young, if an anaesthetic is required in an older dog then should it be done without an anaesthetic in puppies?

In the past, reasons given for withholding an anaesthetic from young animals have included the risk of death or that the anaesthetic procedure itself was likely to be more traumatic than the surgical intervention. In practice, I suspect it was more closely related to the ease of restraint and to economics than anything else. However, the choice may also be influenced by the sensitivities of the owners rather than the animals. This raises the moral principle of whether 'might is right'. Simply because it is physically possible for a human to restrain an animal for an operation does not mean that it is humane to do so, especially if it is possible to reduce or eliminate pain by giving an analgesic or anaesthetic.

Nowadays, it is possible to give neonatal animals an anaesthetic with little loss of life, though this has not always been the case. The development of new anaesthetic and analgesic agents and regimes have reduced the risk to a point where, for experienced animal anaesthetists, there should be no greater loss of life than in adults.

There is no reason to believe that an adult dog should find tail amputation any more traumatic than a puppy given good surgery, modern anaesthetic and analgesic techniques, and good postoperative care. More complications might, however, be expected as the tail will probably only be removed in an adult after it has been injured. While in a few animals there may be delayed healing, this is probably because of an attempt on the part of the veterinary surgeon and the owner to preserve as much of the tail as possible, thus leaving damaged tissue. It has also not been customary to provide postoperative analgesia after docking. More radical excision of damaged tissue, and improved analgesia, may lead to better healing in adult dogs.

It can be argued that both young and old animals may be caused distress by being taken to a strange place with novel smells, noises, people and other animals, apart from the effects of restraint, induction of anaesthesia and surgery. Many of these factors apply to animals visiting a veterinary surgery for a booster vaccination but, unlike puppies, adults will be more used to being in novel surroundings. In addition puppies have to cope with a temporary separation from their dam, as well as being upended, examined, restrained and then having the tail amputated without analgesia. While the puppy may suffer few long term adverse effects, the adult dog may miss its tail and have to learn to balance and even communicate differently.

In the case of docking dogs intended for export, it could be argued that the UK does not have to adopt the standards of other countries (we do not in other areas of dog welfare) and breeders should refuse to export animals. If we choose to compromise our own standards for social or financial purposes this would appear to open the door to practices that most dog breeders would prefer to avoid (for example, ear cropping).

Docking to improve appearance

Breeders of docked breeds often claim that the animal looks better in some way or another with a shortened tail. Certainly, many breeders and others are concerned by the thought of an unknown type of tail, or the dog having a tail at all.

Comment. – Altering the appearance of a dog through surgical interventions is held by some to be a whim of fashion. In some countries, cropping of dogs' ears is still carried out for that reason. However in the UK, not many would consider ear cropping to be justified, even if it were carried out by a veterinarian under anaesthesia, because the underlying reason for the operation is unsound. Furthermore, fashions can change; for example, at one time the Pembroke corgi was not docked whereas it is today.

All breeds are man-made and so looks are inevitably a traditional feature of the breeds as we know them today, though breeds have changed considerably over the past 100 to 200 years, as an examination of old prints will confirm. But only rarely have surgical interventions, rather than breeding, been routinely used to obtain the desired appearance. Today, there is a greater awareness that function is just as important, if not more important, than form, and retaining a tail will give a truer analysis of individual performance (in terms of gait, for example). In fact in other contexts, surgical alteration to produce better looks for show is actively discouraged (for example, operations for entropion or ectropion).

Docking to reduce damage in the home

Docking of the larger breeds, such as gundogs, has been justified for the non-working companion animal on the basis that it prevents damage to the home caused by the dog's tail knocking items off tables, etc. These breeds tend to be attractive to pet owners because they are boisterous and friendly and wag their tails vigorously.

Comment. – These breeds are hardly the most sensible to keep in confined spaces even though they make excellent companions. Again, should an animal undergo docking to compensate for a poor breed selection in the first place?

Docking and hygiene

Docking may be carried out more for reasons of hygiene than appearance in breeds such as the old English sheepdog, Yorkshire terrier and Australian silky terrier to avoid fouling and retention of faeces in the perineal hairs which could lead to maggot infestation.

Comment. – Is there really a high risk of maggot infestation in the UK? Other breeds with the same potential problem are not docked, for example, pekingese, bearded collies, border collies. It can be argued that owners of these breeds should groom their animals more carefully and regularly to prevent the problem occurring. Is it right that an animal should undergo a surgical intervention to compensate for poor or even irresponsible dog ownership? Should not greater attention be paid to educating and training owners in dog husbandry and management rather than removing the tail?

Arguments against docking

Docking causes pain and suffering

Most people would agree that docking of puppies causes some pain although the assessment of the level of pain and the length of time animals suffer is disputed and it depends also on the side effects caused by amputation. Occasionally, animals have to be euthanased as a result.

Comment. – Pain can be ameliorated or eliminated through the use of analgesics and anaesthetics and the risks of side effects in skilled hands are minimal. Those who dock tails could be better trained to avoid side effects. This is being advocated by the pro-docking lobby, which is pushing for an amendment to the law to permit lay-dockers. While training those carrying out the procedure would undoubtedly reduce suffering and the incidence of side effects, this proposal does not address the underlying issue of causing unnecessary pain.

Alternatives to docking

It has been suggested that some of the perceived benefits of docking could be reproduced by methods not requiring surgical intervention and suffering.

Comment. – It may be possible to encourage responsible pet ownership so that, for example, prospective owners could choose a more appropriate breed of dog in the home, or carry out better grooming and trimming to avoid fouling. Sportsmen could trim the tail feathering in working dogs as and when necessary, or examine the dogs more frequently to remove briars, etc, and so minimise tail damage. Alternatively, they could avoid using their dogs in close cover, or possibly choose a more appropriate breed or strain with different coat characteristics.

It may also be possible to change people's perceptions of fashion through education, or breeders could breed for shorter tails. Some breeds already carry a natural bobtail gene (for example, Pembroke corgis, black bobtailed dogs, and old English sheepdogs), while 'stump-tailed' dogs occur spontaneously in many breeds (fox terriers). Shorter tails were bred for in some breeds such as Pembroke corgis, but, by and large, it has not been a selected trait in docked breeds. It should be possible to select for tail shape and length and avoid the problems associated with excessive brachycoccyxia (tail shortness), such as perineal defects, short spines and even lethal defects (as seen in Manx cats).

On the other hand, it has been suggested that the abolition of docking may lead breeders to place undue emphasis on tail type selection and forego other important genetic traits, thus losing valuable bloodlines (and long-standing breeders) to the disadvantage of a breed as a whole. However, the art of breeding has always been that of selecting for multiple factors as breeders do not expect to produce the perfect specimen in a single generation and appreciate that time will be required. The Kennel Club, show judges and breeders may have to encourage sensible selection in the event of a ban.

Miscellaneous considerations

Destruction of surplus dogs

Some breeders have suggested that the public would not buy undocked dogs of normally docked breeds and so these unsaleable animals would have to be killed. It remains to be seen whether the general public would still buy such animals. However, it is likely that at a time of increasing concern for animal welfare, the informed public will not be unduly concerned about the length of a tail and it will probably not affect their choice of pet. After all, looks often only provide a temporary, but important, attraction and matters relating to temperament, cleanliness, costs of upkeep, etc, tend to weigh heavier.

Ethical considerations

Having examined the arguments for and against docking, it should be possible, on the basis of known facts, to examine the justification for the procedure and decide whether and under what circumstances, it is acceptable to dock dogs. It is important to establish the principles of morally relevant arguments to help decide each specific case. In the past such principles have ranged from the claim that it is a human's (breeder's) right to do anything to an animal, over to the other extreme where it is always wrong to harm animals or cause them suffering.

Most people would accept an intermediate position that relies on having to justify causing harm to an animal on the basis that it can be seen to be for a greater good, and that there are no alternative means of achieving the same end. Such a 'greater good' can be for the interests of humans as well as animals, but the suffering in the former case has to be more strongly justified to avoid the charge of cruelty (defined as the infliction of wanton or unjustified suffering). Thus, most people would agree that using dogs to help the blind would be justified whereas using dogs to fight or bait would not.

Introducing the concept of animal rights into the docking debate gives rise to much rhetoric but leads to few acceptable conclusions. This is partly because the moral consensus of society does not admit to the concept of animals' rights over a human obligation to care for and protect animals. A claim of a 'right' is often an attempt to play a trump card and, furthermore, 'rights claims' tend to be mutually exclusive. Thus, the right of a breeder to dock is balanced by those advocating that animals have a right not to be caused harm; the right of a breeder to insist on docking is balanced by the right of the veterinary surgeon to refuse. There is considerable difficulty in establishing the basis for claiming absolute rights for animals and humans.

However, most people would agree that humans have a responsibility to protect animals and to guard their welfare, to avoid misusing or abusing them, and to refrain from causing them unnecessary or avoidable suffering. Thus any surgical interference to an animal should be in its best interests, or in the best interests of humans or other animals, providing those benefits are in balance with the harms caused (for example, research to produce a canine vaccine may be justifiable whereas producing a designer dog [illegible] severe defects may not). Normally it w[illegible] be necessary to show before carrying [illegible] procedure that the evil prevented was g[illegible] than that done, and that there was no al[illegible] tive way involving less suffering that [illegible] achieve the same end. Thus the assessm[illegible] benefit and animal suffering have to be [illegible] fully evaluated and balanced.

At the present time we do not have th[illegible] tures to decide how many animals injure[illegible] tail during their lifetime, or how many [illegible] injuries would occur if docking was b[illegible] It may be possible to obtain these f[illegible] over the next few years if adequate mo[illegible] ing procedures are put in place. This [illegible] nub of the preventive measure argum[illegible] working dogs and, indeed, for ju[illegible] many other prophylactic surgical in[illegible] tions in dogs and other species. The pr[illegible] ity of tail damage occurring would ha[illegible] calculated and the level at which it wo[illegible] acceptable to carry out preventive do[illegible] established. In my opinion, such [illegible] should be at least 50 per cent.

Conclusion

All veterinary surgeons take an oa[illegible] qualifying which states that they will do[illegible] best to protect the welfare of animals i[illegible] care. Welfare can be interpreted in[illegible] ways but many would take it to includ[illegible] obligation not to inflict unnecessary su[illegible] ing. In the event of any uncertainty, it [illegible] be argued that the primary responsibility [illegible] veterinary surgeon is to be the animal's [illegible] cate and to give the benefit of any do[illegible] the animal. Veterinary surgeons, particu[illegible] therefore, should not cause animals to [illegible] pain, distress, discomfort or lasting [illegible] without good reason.

As suggested above there are many [illegible] ments that do not justify docking o[illegible] grounds of hygiene or preventing dam[illegible] the home. Even prevention of damage to [illegible] in an animal's life as a direct res[illegible] humans' use of those animals is questio[illegible] as the case has not been proven beyond [illegible] sonable doubt and alternative strategies [illegible] be employed to good effect. In any even[illegible] a premise could be applied to any orga[illegible] the probability of those at risk of [illegible] damage has to be taken into account.

When justifying docking for the [illegible] the animal's appearance it is the [illegible] belief that human pleasure is being [illegible] against animal suffering. Both can be [illegible] ed as trivial or important depending [illegible] viewpoint. But if docking is claim[illegible] justifiable on these grounds, might [illegible] same argument be used to sanction [illegible] ping and even dog fighting? I [illegible] breeders and veterinary surgeons [illegible] together to establish accurate figures [illegible] municate and try to understand each [illegible] concerns, and to do their best to pro[illegible] animals in their care.

Acknowledgements. – I gratefully a[illegible] ledge the helpful criticisms by the [illegible] and secretariat of the BVA Animal W[illegible] Foundation and its working party on [illegible] and of Dr Henry Carter. The views exp[illegible] in this article, however, are necessar[illegible] own.

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference:	**#2**
Citation Title:	**Tail Docking In Dogs: a review of the issues**
Citation Author (s):	**Bennett P, Perini E.**
Publication:	***Australian Veterinary Journal***
Year Published:	**2003**
Country:	**AUSTRALIA**
Type Of Article:	**Data-Driven Study NO**
	Literature Review YES
	Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

The Bennet/Perrini article is often quoted by anti-docking activists.

The New Zealand Council of Docked Breeds undertook an extensive analysis of the article with startling findings.

c. With regard to the article and the circumstances surrounding it's publication, it is telling to note the following points:

   (i) 61 references are cited in the article. Of these, only 13 relate to dogs (canis familiaris);

   (ii) Of the 13 references relating to dogs, 4 of them actually support tail shortening;

   (iii) The remaining 48 references pertain to either humans, sheep, cattle, pigs, animal rights and even hens;

   (iv) The report does not refer anywhere (even to refute) to two of the most well known and respected reports on the subject – a thesis by Dr Schmidtke in 1951 and a scientific study by Professor Volokhoc in 1941;

   (v) The article clearly lacks objectivity, which is not surprising given Ms Bennett's strongly held views on the subject (refer her own website: www.hevnsent.com);

   (vi) The article was commissioned by the Australian Veterinary Association;

   (vii) Publication of the article coincided with deliberations in New South Wales regarding the (then) proposed legislation to ban tail docking, which has since been enacted.

d. In the NZCDB's view this article comprises nothing more than an apolaustic review of previously published literature on a variety of matters – most of which do not relate directly to dogs or puppies and can not validly be extrapolated to do the same. The article does not refer to any new empirical data

1. (Lack of) Scientific Support for the Banning of Docking

The NZVA & SPCA, like their counterparts in Australia, rely almost exclusively on Bennett & Perini (2003) for scientific support of their claims that docking should be banned. However, **Bennett & Perini is a *review, not an experimental scientific investigation,*** yet the authors still make statements which (i) might sound authoritative but are actually simply their opinion & (ii) are not the whole truth. Further, from the outset, one might ask what qualifications Bennett & Perini have, which gives them the authority or skill or basic knowledge to produce such a landmark document (being used to potentially influence the lives of hundreds of thousands of people**). In fact, they are neither physiologists nor medicos nor veterinarians, but rather, they are psychologists**. They are therefore best qualified to mount philosophical rather than scientific arguments. The publication should therefore be regarded as an excellent source of food for thought & not as a critical analysis of scientific facts. The following points illustrate this assertion, without attempting to be an exhaustive analysis of the entire article :

(a) p.209, 2/3 way down 1st column : Re "....burden of proof actually lies with those who support the procedure....", is the opinion of the authors, ie., dog breeders are aware of specific purposes of tail docking when the breeds were originally developed - they were not simply docked, say, because owners thought the animals might look better may hundreds or even >1000 years ago. Docking "causes no detriment to the animal" because, as demonstrated elsewhere, there is unlikely to be physical pain, the docked breeds do not suffer any social/psychological disadvantages, neither do they endure any physical limitations (such as poor balance) nor do they suffer any secondary consequences in terms of health problems.

(b) p.209, 2/3 way down 2nd column : The fact that the investigations were performed on adult ruminants, has been conveniently omitted. However, the sentence "Evidence showing....nonverbal humans & animals." makes a good point.

(c) p.210, 1st column : The use of data from lambs, piglets & calves is scientifically invalid due to their advanced physiological maturity relative to the dog (see Fritsch; Grandjean below).

(d) p.210, mid 2nd column : Para. "It seems...immaturity...unable to feel pain." This is one of two strong points in defence of tail docking. (The other is "g" below.) This question of whether or not new-borns feel physical pain is discussed in the following section.

(e) It is also noteworthy that on their p.210 (bottom, 1st column) Bennett & Perini say "At a later age it might be expected that, since sensory & perceptive processes are more developed, any pain....". This implies that sensory & perceptive processes are less developed at an earlier age, which is precisely what we are saying.

(f) (e) p.211, mid 2nd column : The frequent use of highly emotive language is unscientific & shows distinct bias. Eg., "Very few people would feel comfortable amputating a limb from a human infant or an elderly family member in the end stages of dementia without anaesthesia."

(g) p.212, bottom 2nd column : Note, unable to find scientific evidence...

(h) p.213, 2nd column : The suggestion that locomotion or communication are impaired by tail docking should be dismissed simply on the basis that, eg., docked breeds do as well as any other breed in competitive agility trials, some are used in police work, & one would certainly be seriously challenged to show any manner of social inferiority in the docked breeds, especially, say, Doberman, Boxer, Rottweiler, Schnauzers, German Shorthaired Pointer, etc. Clearly, docked breeds have no trouble expressing themselves in relationships with humans, or they would not be so popular as pets, eg., the Boxer is the most popular dog pet in Australia & the Jack Russell, the most popular in the USA.

(i) Finally, re. References, only approx. 10 of the 61 total refer to dogs & with respect to individual references:

(1) No. 1 (Wansbrough, 1996) is itself a review & therefore should not be quoted as "showing" or "demonstrating" something.

(2) No. 5 (Lester et al., 1996) is entirely concerned with lambs, yet is employed to support the contention that pups feel pain.

(3) Nos. 13 & 14 (Ley et al., 1989; Whay et al., 1997) were studies on sheep & cattle & are used to suggest (not prove) that these species might experience pain similar to humans; this has little or no relevance to pain sensibility in newborn pups.

(4) No. 18 (Lester et al., 1991) & others, are not only of limited value because of the more mature species & generally older individuals, but also because of the use of cortisol as an index of pain; ie., despite the frequent use of cortisol responses in this manner, great caution must be exercised because of its non-specific nature, eg., similar cortisol responses can be evoked simply by chasing an animal, presumably due to fear or even the stresses of exercise.

(5) No. 25 (Johnston et al., 1995), like numerous other references (eg., 26, 39, 42, etc), is of dubious value because of the advanced level of maturity of the species being studied, relative to the dog.

(6) No. 36 (Melzack et al., 1997) concerns "phantom limb" discomfort; not only is the tail an appendage, which is quite different to a limb, but Bennett & Perini have been quite inaccurate in the quoted numerical values.

(7) No. 37 (Lunam et al., 1996) investigates not only a very different species (a bird), but a very different body organ (beak vs. tail) & is therefore likely to be of no value other than to assist with the question of beak trimming & welfare of hens.

(8) No. 44 (Grunau et al., 1994) surely requires a huge leap of faith to believe that such observations on humans indicate that docked pups might feel relatively greater pain in later life when challenged by painful stimuli.

Please Note : The sole publication (Darke et al., 1985) being quoted as

demonstrating that docking provides no benefit in terms of prevention of tail injuries, relies on there being no difference in the rate of tail injury between traditionally docked & traditionally undocked breeds. That is, only 0.4% of vet treatments of dogs are for tail problems, **illustrating that docking is a successful preventative procedure, being routinely performed in breeds susceptible to tail damage (like vaccinating our own babies). Breeds (the majority) which have an insignificant incidence of tail problems, don't need to be & are therefore not docked.**

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Tail docking in dogs: a review of the issues

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Different groups in our community hold strong views about tail docking in domestic dogs. These range from veterinary associations and welfare organisations, which typically want the practice banned, to purebred dog associations, which vigorously oppose the introduction of antidocking legislation. An evaluation of the tail docking issue, which is informed and nonemotive, requires the integration of moral views with biological and behavioural facts. In recent years, much data have been accumulated concerning the welfare implications of tail docking. Unfortunately, however, there has been limited transfer of this knowledge to people interested in the issue. In this review some of the main arguments for and against canine tail docking are presented and evaluated.
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The subject of tail docking in domestic dogs has been reviewed previously[1,2] but remains controversial in many countries. It has traditionally been a widespread practice, with approximately one third of all recognised pure dog breeds historically being docked. Tail docking has been banned in several European countries, however, and is limited in others. In the UK, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons describes tail docking, unless medically indicated, as unacceptable. Paradoxically, docking is only permitted in the UK if it is performed by a veterinary surgeon.[2] Since this means that a refusal to dock by this profession might virtually eliminate the practice, the fact that the College has never taken action against any veterinarian for conducting the 'unacceptable' procedure is perhaps indicative of continued ambivalence about tail docking. Accordingly, docking is legal and very common in many other developed countries, such as the USA.

While docking is legal in most areas of Australia, some veterinarians refuse to perform the procedure.[3] Others report doing so only because they fear that inexperienced breeders will otherwise take matters into their own hands. The Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC), in their Code of Practice for the Tail Docking of Dogs, specifies that docking *'should only be carried out in respect of those breeds with a known history or propensity to injury and/or damage in their tails in the course of their normal activities for therapeutic and/or prophylactic purposes…'*.[4] As with other organisations, however, the ANKC has, thus far, failed to act against breeders who dock breeds for which no scientific evidence of a propensity for tail damage exists. Clearly, then, the issue of tail docking remains controversial. It is undoubtedly complex, involving economic, aesthetic, welfare and moral considerations. In addition, there is a perceived lack of scientific evidence directly relevant to the issue, which means that decisions are made at least partially on the basis of inference and speculation. This paper reviews the main arguments for and against tail docking in dogs, in order to facilitate a more informed debate about the issue than is presently possible.

What is tail docking?

Tail docking refers to the amputation of part or all of an animal's tail. It can be accomplished by application of a tight rubber ring around the tail. This serves to occlude blood vessels supplying those tissues distal to the ring, resulting in ischaemia, necrosis and, eventually, loss of the tail. This 'banding' method is commonly used in agricultural species, such as lambs and dairy cows, and, in one Australian survey, was reported to be used by 16% of dog breeders who perform their own docking procedures.[3] In dogs, however, tail docking is more commonly performed via a surgical procedure. According to the ANKC, docking may be conducted either by a veterinary surgeon, by an experienced breeder, or by some other person in the presence of, or with the assistance of, an experienced breeder. An experienced breeder is defined as anyone who has been involved with a docked breed for a period of at least 5 years and

who, within that time, has bred at least three litters of which he/she has personally (under instruction) docked the tails of these litters.[4] This implies that tail docking may often be conducted by breeders rather than by veterinarians, but we could find no information detailing the proportion of docking operations carried out by the different groups. Docking generally takes place between 3 and 5 days after birth. More often than not, the puppies are given no anaesthesia or analgesia but are simply restrained manually. The hair around the site of amputation may be clipped. Part or all of the tail is then removed using sharp scissors or a blade. One or more sutures may be applied if necessary. Docking is not without risk and anecdotal reports of puppies dying from shock or blood loss abound. No published studies could be found, however, which document rates of docking-related complications or deaths either in veterinary surgeries or in the community.

Surgical amputation is sometimes considered to result in less acute and chronic pain than banding, although this has been tested only in lambs and available results (discussed later) are equivocal.[5-7] Also, since lambs are born in a more developed state than are puppies, and are often docked at an older age, the applicability of these studies to dogs is not known. When docking very young puppies, anaesthesia has not been recommended until recently because the risk of convulsions, respiratory failure or cardiac difficulties was considered to be unacceptably high. Advances in veterinary medicine now mean that such risks are reduced, but only 10% of veterinarians in an Australian survey reported using anaesthesia when docking tails.[3] Anaesthetic agents are generally unavailable to breeders who dock their own puppies.

Arguments against tail docking in domestic dogs.

Since it is not customary in our society to remove limbs or appendages from animals arbitrarily, it may be expected that tail docking served some important function in the past. Indeed, if tail docking was associated with established benefits in the past, it might be assumed that those currently calling for a ban on the procedure have a burden of proof to justify why a change to existing practices is necessary. It is argued later in this paper that there are no established benefits associated with tail docking in dogs and that, for several reasons, the burden of proof actually lies with those who support the procedure to demonstrate unequivocally that it causes no detriment to the animal. First, however, it is worthwhile considering the arguments most commonly used to justify calls for a ban on tail docking.

Acute pain associated with tail docking

Many people who oppose tail docking do so on the grounds that the docking process is likely to cause acute pain. In contrast, those who support tail docking typically argue that little, if any, pain is likely to be experienced due to the immature nervous system found in very young canines. Interestingly, a survey conducted in Australia in 1996 found that 76% of veterinarians surveyed believed that tail docking causes significant to severe pain, with none believing that no pain is experienced. In contrast, 82% of dog breeders believed that docked puppies experience no, or only mild, pain, with only 18% believing that docking causes significant pain.[3] This difference of opinion is interesting and is discussed further elsewhere.[8] More pertinent in the present context is the issue of whether science is able to resolve the question of whether very young puppies are capable of experiencing pain. A second issue concerns whether or not the magnitude of this pain, if it exists, can be assessed.

Can puppies feel pain? — Pain is an inherently subjective phenomenon that cannot be identified or quantified using available technologies. It must, therefore, be inferred on the basis of indirect measures. This is not an issue unique to the tail docking problem but one that has plagued scientists and philosophers for many years. We simply do not know when another organism, including another human, is feeling pain, but must infer this on the basis of their behaviour, their physiological responses, or their ability to verbally tell us that something 'hurts'. Pain in humans, for example, may be measured by asking the person 'Do you feel pain?' 'Where?' 'How bad is the pain on a scale of 1-10?'. The effectiveness of such measures depends, of course, on the truthfulness of the person in question. For example, a child claiming to be in severe pain is more likely to be believed if they are lying prone in a hospital bed following major surgery, than if they have just been told by the physical education teacher that a 3 km hike is to be undertaken. Even verbal measures of pain, then, considered to be among the most persuasive of all measures, are of limited veracity. A congruence between reporting pain and actually feeling pain can never be absolutely guaranteed.[9]

The problem of inferring pain is even greater in nonverbal populations.[10,11] In fact, in order to reduce our present reliance on verbal responses so that nonverbal organisms are adequately included, there have been calls for a change in the definition of pain.[9] Behavioural indices of pain, such as a reluctance to come in contact with a potentially painful stimulus and distress vocalisations, are often employed, as are physiological indicators, such as a raised concentration of plasma cortisol or corticosterone, depending on the species, and increased heart rate. Webster,[12] in his discussion of animal welfare science, argues that in order to adequately understand the nature of pain in animals it is necessary to consider three areas of research, physiology, behaviour and neurobiology, and that none of these are sufficient in isolation. As an example, Webster[12] discusses the fact that ruminant species, such as sheep and cattle, that are known to have thresholds to pain similar to those demonstrated by humans,[13,14] can sustain foot and leg injuries, that would reduce a human to immobility, without displaying abnormal behaviour. Evidence showing that species differ in pain reactivity and pain thresholds means that all of our current indices of pain are of limited value when applied to nonverbal humans and animals. We simply can never know for certain whether or not these organisms feel pain as we do and as we alone are able to subjectively report. Despite this difficulty, as a society we typically make the anthropomorphic assumption that animals and infants do feel pain when they show behavioural and/or physiological changes that human adults exhibit when undergoing a 'painful' experience.

Unfortunately, the problems associated with inferring pain are magnified again when considering very young infants and young animals, which may be physically incapable of displaying behaviours thought to be indicative of pain.[15] It may also be impossible in these organisms to extract blood or saliva samples in sufficient quantities to permit the measurement of stress-related hormones, and the very act of collecting the samples may be sufficiently stressful or painful to confound any results obtained. Generally, in the absence of more acceptable evidence, we make the assumption that these organisms feel pain when put in situations that would cause pain to ourselves. This is an

assumption that we feel justified in making on the basis of erring on the side of caution and, indeed, some would argue, one that is ethically mandated in our care of animals, young infants and disabled adults.

Perhaps it is due to the difficulty of unequivocally demonstrating the presence of pain in very young organisms that very few attempts have been made to assess whether pain is experienced when young puppies undergo tail docking. Studies using other species, available in larger numbers, may be instructive. Several research groups have reported that docking causes acute pain and distress in lambs,[5,6] piglets,[16] and calves.[17] In all studies the animals demonstrated behavioural and/or physiological changes in response to docking that were interpreted as being consistent with the presence of acute pain.

These results strengthen claims that the docking of dogs' tails is likely to cause acute pain, but this conclusion can still be challenged for two reasons. The first arises because most available studies used banding to dock the tails rather than surgical amputation. It could be argued, therefore, that the acute pain responses observed in agricultural animals were caused by the pressure of the bands on nociceptors in the skin at the site of application, and that a lesser response might be expected following the much more rapid surgery typically used to dock dogs. Little scientific evidence directly addresses this issue although, in two studies that compared three docking methods in lambs at 5, 21 and 42 days, banding did appear to cause more pain and distress, as measured using behavioural indicators[6] and plasma cortisol levels,[7] than surgical docking. A significant degree of pain resulted from surgical docking, however, and it appeared greater than that caused by banding in conjunction with application of a clamp, which destroyed innervation to tissue distal to the site of application. In addition, whereas all three methods of docking were reported to cause considerable pain for up to 3 hours following treatment, plasma cortisol concentrations returned to baseline levels more rapidly in the two banded groups than in the surgical group, in which they remained elevated for over 3 hours.[7] Interpretation of these results is made difficult by the poorly specified relationship between the various pain indicators used and actual pain, as was discussed above. This issue is also discussed further in two papers by Lester et al who argue that, since behavioural responses vary depending on the docking methodology employed, plasma cortisol concentrations may provide a more accurate measure of docking-associated distress.[5,18] On this basis, the results provided both by Lester et al[5,18] and by Kent and Molony[7] suggest that surgical docking may result in more acute pain and more prolonged distress than does banding, at least in lambs. Regardless of which method of docking causes relatively more pain or distress than other methods, if it is accepted that the degree of avoidance behaviour or the extent of change in physiological indices is an indication of relative severity of pain, then there are clearly reasonable grounds for arguing that surgical docking causes some amount of acute pain in the species studied, as does banding, and that either method is also likely to cause pain in other physiologically similar species, such as the dog.

A second issue that prevents easy generalisations from studies using agricultural animals to dogs relates to the fact that dogs are typically docked between 3 and 5 days of age, whereas lambs and cattle are sometimes docked much later. At a later age it might be expected that, since sensory and perceptive processes are more developed, any pain associated with docking may be intensified. There have been several studies that have examined pain responses in animals docked at a fairly young age. In lambs less than one week old, tail docking using a banding technique caused distress for approximately thirty minutes, as indicated by both behavioural measures and plasma cortisol levels.[19] Interestingly, two breeds of lamb appeared to show an age-dependent but different increase in the plasma cortisol response to docking although, in both breeds, pain responses to tail docking peaked in the period between 4 hours and a few days following birth.[20] Contrary to expectations, it was also noted that the surgical method appeared more painful in 5-day-old lambs, according to some behavioural measures, than in older groups.[6] A similar age effect, with younger animals exhibiting more behavioural signs of pain than older animals, has also been reported following docking in cattle.[21]

It seems, then, that immaturity may not protect some animals against feeling acute pain during and immediately following the docking process. The relevance of this information to the current issue may still be questioned, however, on the grounds that dogs, like most carnivores, are born in a much less developed state than are most herbivores. Whereas a 3- to 5-day-old lamb exhibits a well developed nervous system and complex behavioural repertoire, young pups of the same age have few fully functional sensory organs and exhibit very few behaviours. Newborn pups are unable to perceive or respond to visual or auditory information. Might not they also be unable to feel pain?

This question is difficult to answer conclusively, although it has been established in other mammalian species that immaturity does not equal insensibility to pain. Newborn rat pups, for example, actively respond to painful stimuli immediately after birth, well before the modalities of vision and hearing are completely functional (reviewed in Anand and Craig[9]). Additional information comes from human studies. It is instructive that, before 1987, it was widely believed that neonatal humans lacked the neurophysiological equipment necessary to experience pain. This belief was used to justify the then common practice of performing invasive surgical procedures on infants without administration of analgesia, but was challenged in a series of studies in the late 1980s.[22] These established that the neonatal nociceptive system, and even that possessed by preterm infants on the very borderline of survival, has the anatomical and physiological equipment necessary for pain perception.

Newborn human infants, and even those born prematurely, also show behavioural and biochemical reactions consistent with the perception of pain in response to medical procedures that cause tissue damage.[23-26] In one recent study, human infants, born between the ages of 28 and 32 weeks gestational age, learned to anticipate the simple heel-stick procedure used to collect blood samples. These infants showed changed facial expressions, cardiac reactions and movement durations when their heel was raised before the procedure, indicating that they were anticipating its occurrence, believed to be only mildly painful.[24] Administration of analgesia to infants improves clinical outcomes following medical procedures expected to be painful, providing additional circumstantial evidence that the pain experienced by neonatal human infants is similar to that experienced by adults. Some authors have even argued that the immaturity of sensory processing within the newborn spinal cord of human infants leads to lower thresholds for excitation and sensitisation, therefore potentially maximising the central

effects of tissue-damaging inputs.[27] A similar relationship might be expected to pertain to adult and neonatal canines, unless dogs differ in this respect from other mammalian species.

Arguing against such a remote possibility, the limited behavioural evidence available supports the conclusion that docking is a painful procedure in canine pups. In a single available study,[28] in which the responses of 50 pups to docking were recorded, it was found that all puppies struggled and vocalised intensely and repeatedly at the time of amputation, recording an average of 24 'shrieks' and 18 'whimpers' during and immediately after docking. They also vocalised intensely as a suture was applied. Studies examining animal pain responses typically use vocalisation as an indicator of pain and stress.[15] Thus, the authors of this study reasonably concluded that the pups did feel significant pain at the time of docking.

It seems, then, that whereas the existence of pain in young dogs cannot be directly observed or measured at the present time, all available evidence reviewed thus far is consistent with the claim that docking causes acute pain to those dogs undergoing the procedure. In contrast, no evidence could be found to support the counter claim that newborn pups do not experience any pain at the time of docking.

How much pain do puppies feel? — A related issue, and perhaps an even more difficult one to resolve, concerns the magnitude of pain felt by pups during docking. It seems quite reasonable to accept that docking causes some pain, but to argue nonetheless that the pain is minimal and completely justified by the benefits that accrue. We do, after all, allow our children and pets to be vaccinated and we permit potentially painful medical procedures, such as circumcision, to be conducted on members of our community, such as the young, the aged and the intellectually disabled, who are unable to describe their experiences of pain or consent to medical procedures. Of course, such procedures are conducted only after careful consideration of the amount of pain likely to be inflicted and the potential benefits. The benefits reported to be associated with tail docking are evaluated later in this paper. In the following paragraphs, information relevant to determining the magnitude of pain experienced during docking is considered.

In their discussion of tail docking in dogs, Noonan et al[28] noted that breeders often use the fact that pups either suckle or fall asleep immediately following docking to support their view that the pups do not experience significant pain. However, while such behaviour may indicate that the pain felt during docking is minimal, there is no empirical evidence to support an association between lack of pain and these behaviours. On the contrary, other studies, in which young animals or humans show increased feeding or what is known as a 'sleeping fit' following a painful or stressful experience, have concluded that this may be either a displacement activity or an adaptive mechanism which ensures that the baby animal has sufficient nourishment and rest to survive under adverse circumstances.[11,19,21] In addition, as discussed in Noonan et al,[28] suckling behaviour may provide analgesia by stimulating the release of endogenous opioids, with oral administration of carbohydrate-laden solutions being commonly used to reduce pain responses in human infants.[29] It is possible, therefore, that pups suckle following docking to reduce docking-associated pain, rather than because the pain they feel is minimal. This issue could be investigated empirically by subjecting puppies to various experiences believed likely to cause pain and noting their responses, particularly whether their sleeping or suckling responses increase or decrease with the magnitude of pain believed to be inflicted, but it would be ethically difficult to justify such a study.

A similar refutation can be levelled against the common argument that pups are unlikely to feel significant pain during docking due to a reported lack of myelination in the nerve cells responsible for pain conduction. This argument is not persuasive, since myelination is not necessary to enable nerve cell conduction, but merely speeds it up.[11,30] Puppies may experience docking related pain more slowly than older dogs, but an estimated 0.25 second delay[2] in pain perception says little about the magnitude of pain experienced. Indeed, some authors claim that puppies may be more sensitive to pain than adult dogs, because inhibitory nerve pathways are also poorly developed.[1,2] In human infants it is commonly argued that pain perception may be magnified by the immature state of the spinal cord[27,31,32] and, in rat pups, there is evidence that very immature organisms may experience pain more intensely than do more mature infants (cited in McVey[31]). In 'tailed' animals, like canines, the spinal cord extends further down the vertebral column in infants than it does in adults, perhaps leading to a higher risk of docking-related infection and, potentially, a greater magnitude of pain.[2]

It is difficult to imagine how the issue of accurately assessing the magnitude of pain associated with docking may be resolved. Indeed, the issue is a philosophical one rather than a technological one, in that pain is inherently subjective. As there can be no conclusive evidence of pain felt by others it may be instructive that, in similar cases, where the magnitude of pain experienced by members of our own community cannot be measured, we tend to feel most comfortable in assuming the worst. The tail docking procedure varies quite substantially from minor procedures such as vaccinations, in that it involves complete amputation of a limb. Very few people would feel comfortable amputating a limb from a human infant or an elderly family member in the end stages of dementia without anaesthesia, so perhaps there is cause to give puppies the same consideration. While the evidence that pups feel substantial pain during tail docking is not scientifically conclusive, it is compelling. Pups do exhibit those pain responses of which they are capable, and there is every reason to expect that they experience considerable pain while being docked.

Of course, this in itself does not argue against tail docking per se, but merely suggests that our present methodology should be improved. The implicit conclusion that puppies should not be docked without adequate anaesthesia and analgesia need not imply that they should not be docked at all although, as described above, any decision to impose a surgical procedure on an organism unable to provide informed consent requires careful analysis of the costs and potential benefits to that organism. Certainly, given that very few people do appear to administer anaesthesia or analgesia during docking, the potential painfulness of the procedure is a significant cost that needs to be considered.

Chronic health problems associated with tail docking

Many of those who argue against tail docking would continue to do so even were adequate anaesthesia and analgesia to be provided at the time of docking. Some would do this on the basis of claims that a number of chronic health problems are associated with tail docking. Problems reviewed previously[1] include atrophy and degeneration of tail and pelvic muscles, leading to an increased risk of faecal incontinence, and compro-

mised pelvic diaphragm integrity, leading to an increased incidence of perineal hernia. It has also been claimed that acquired urinary incontinence is over-represented in specific docked breeds,[33] with one large study finding a significant statistical association between tail docking and acquired urinary incompetence that was independent of other factors such as the size of the dog.[34]

While these studies provide some cause for concern, evidence supporting claims of increased health problems in docked dogs is typically weak. A significant issue concerns a lack of adequately controlled studies comparing docked dogs with undocked dogs of the same breed. Without such studies, it is possible to argue that some breeds are simply more susceptible to these health problems and that any association with docking is spurious, existing only because these breeds happen to be among those that are docked. Indeed, it is conceivable that some breeds were docked initially in an effort to minimise health problems associated with genetic weaknesses, although we were unable to find any evidence in support of this claim. Individual breeders who dock their puppies clearly do not believe that the risks outweigh the benefits of docking and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, appear justified in maintaining this view for the present time.

This conclusion is not without some risk, however, as, in the absence of large scale, properly controlled studies, it is possible that a significantly increased health risk, affecting a substantial number of dogs overall, may not be evident to an individual owner or breeder, or even to a breed club. Those who argue against tail docking are equally justified, therefore, in maintaining the view that the procedure potentially causes harm to some dogs. Unless tail docking is justified on some defensible ground, the burden of proof falls on those who would dock to prove that the procedure does not lead to chronic health problems in even a small percentage of dogs. Studies investigating whether chronic health problems occur in the docked members of a breed but not in the undocked members of the same breed, or vice versa, are clearly required to resolve this issue.

Chronic pain associated with tail docking

The issue of whether chronic pain may occur in relation to tail docking is an important one. In humans, chronic pain following the amputation of limbs can take two forms. The first, in which pain is referred to the missing limb, is sufficiently common to warrant its own name, phantom limb pain (PLP). According to one comprehensive review,[35] PLP occurs in 50 to 75% of human amputees in the first week following amputation. In some people the pain resolves quite rapidly, but studies suggest that up to 60% of amputees experience referred pain for at least 2 years. Over 20% report daily pain attacks at 2 years post-amputation. Persistent severe pain continues indefinitely in 5 to 10% of human amputees. In addition to PLP, many amputees experience considerable pain in the remaining limb stump. Post-operative pain, lasting up to 3 weeks, occurs in 50% of amputees. Two years after amputation, stump pain affects 21% of amputees.[35] Some amputees describe the pain as a stabbing sensation or electric current that is strictly localised to the stump. Others report 'nerve storms' during which sharp shooting pains last for up to 2 days. Pain may be spontaneous or triggered by stimulating the stump; even a light touch can result in an unpleasant burning sensation.

The aetiology of PLP and stump pain remains controversial although there is an association between the condition of the limb prior to amputation and the subsequent occurrence of PLP. Chronic pain is more common in those with severe pre-amputation pain. Neurological lesions can also moderate pain experiences, as can psychological factors and the type of limb injury sustained. None of these relationships is particularly strong, however, and chronic PLP is experienced by 'normal' persons who lose a perfectly healthy limb, either through accident or misadventure.[35] Stump pain is also most common in amputees with clear stump pathology, such as skin or circulatory disorders. Importantly, however, stump pain also occurs in people where the wound appears completely healed. According to Jensen and Rasmussen,[35] careful examination of stump sensibility reveals areas of hypalgesia, hyperalgesia, hyperpathia or allodynia in almost all amputees.

It is difficult to generalise from adult human amputees to neonatal pups, since amputation of an adult limb causes a sudden cessation of afferent input to the spinal cord from the severed nerves, while afferent input from the tail of a 3-day-old pup is likely to be poorly developed. In addition, the tails of most pups are assumed to be functioning normally prior to docking, with no pre-amputation pain and no limb pathology. There are reports that phantom limb experiences occur in up to 20% of people in which limbs are congenitally absent, or when amputation occurs before the age of 6 years.[36] Other studies, reviewed in Melzack et al,[31] have contradicted these findings, however, leaving the issue open to conjecture. The fact that ongoing pain occurs in even a small number of persons who experience limb amputation very early in life, or who are born with congenitally absent limbs, seems sufficient to raise concerns about tail docking in dogs, especially in cases where the potential benefits of docking are unclear or ethically indefensible. Since psychological factors are implicated in some cases of PLP and stump pain in humans, however, and it is not clear whether animals possess the cognitive apparatus required to feel psychological distress upon the absence of a limb, it is relevant to consider whether there are physiological mechanisms likely to lead to chronic pain following limb amputation in non-human species.

Peripheral nerve sections in all mammalian species produce many anatomical, physiological and biochemical changes. These include spontaneous nerve tissue activity, increased sensitivity to mechanical stimuli and specific neurochemicals, and the formation of nerve sprouts and neuromas. The presence of neuromas may be particularly relevant in the present context, as these are frequently observed to occur following amputation in animals. Neuromas are bundles of nerve fibres that develop almost inevitably when axons are severed in mammals and birds. They consist of swollen, tangled masses of nerves, present either as one large mass or as smaller, scattered masses.[37] In most cases, neuromas resolve over several weeks as the excess axon sprouts degenerate and the mass regresses. They can persist indefinitely, however, causing spontaneous nerve activity which may be perceived as chronic pain. Neuromas have been documented in lamb tail stumps up to 6 months after docking,[38] in pig tail stumps following docking,[39] and in the beaks of chickens that have had their beaks trimmed.[40] In chickens, neuromas formed after partial beak amputation continue to develop for at least 70 days and can persist for up to 70 weeks.[37,40]

We were unable to find any scientifically controlled studies demonstrating the presence, or absence, of neuromas in dogs following tail docking. This lack of evidence may simply be due

to the fact that dogs, unlike farm animal species, are not regularly killed in large numbers soon after docking takes place, so the appropriate assay cannot be conducted. It is possible that dogs, due to the very young age at which they are docked, develop less persistent neuromas than species treated later in life but there is no evidence to support this claim. Indeed, in one study in which three canines with docked tails were euthanased for behavioural problems, all of the dogs were found to have neuromas even though the docking process had occurred many years previously.[41] Due to the biased nature of this very small sample, it would not be appropriate to generalise the findings. In addition, those who support docking are typically able to argue that they have lived with docked dogs over many years without observing signs of pain associated with the tail stump. Such anecdotal observations do not 'prove' that docked dogs do not develop neuromas or feel persistent pain, because dogs are adept at hiding injuries and disguising pain. Certainly, many people in our community experience constant pain due to arthritis or other debilitating diseases without revealing this pain to those around them. An alternative explanation is that subtle signs of pain or discomfort are simply not noticed by many dog owners, or that they are misattributed to other factors, such as a bad temperament. While researching this paper the authors obtained several anecdotal reports of docked dogs with extremely sensitive tail stumps and other odd, stump-associated, behaviours. Most owners of docked dogs report seeing no such behaviours, however, and, in the absence of convincing evidence one way or the other, the issue remains undecided.

The potential development of neuroma-associated pain following docking, even if not established beyond doubt in dogs, seems sufficient to raise welfare concerns about tail docking. One might hope that neuromas develop in only a small proportion of docked dogs and that most of them resolve over a period of weeks or months. Even in this best case scenario, however, one must question the value of subjecting any dog to prolonged or constant pain unless there are clearly defensible benefits associated with tail docking. Perhaps more importantly, docking is typically carried out just before the critical formative period of a dog's life, in which most of its enduring social skills and behaviours are established. Since the impact of chronic pain on our own ability to function adequately in society is unquestioned, the justification for subjecting any dog to this experience needs careful consideration.

Before completing this section, it is worthwhile briefly considering evidence emerging from human infant studies, which suggest that pain experienced early in life may increase later sensitivity to pain and have behavioural ramifications (reviewed in Whitfield and Grunau[32]). Male infants circumcised soon after birth with no analgesia display increased distress when given vaccinations at 4 or 6 months of age, when compared to infants either not circumcised or circumcised following application of an analgesic cream.[42,43] Preterm infants who require treatment in an intensive care unit, later (at 4 to 5 years of age) similarly display higher somatization scores (physical complaints such as headache or stomach ache in the absence of a clear organic cause) than age-matched controls.[44] According to one review, prolonged pain in the newborn period in preterm infants may produce a relatively permanent shift in basal autonomic arousal, which may have long term sequelae including effects on attention and learning and the development of behaviour problems.[32] It is argued that the plasticity of peripheral and central sensory connections in the neonatal period means that early damage can lead to prolonged structural and functional alterations in pain pathways that can last into adult life.[27] While these effects have not been demonstrated to occur in species other than humans, the benefits of tail docking would need to be reasonably compelling to justify exposing any animal to the potential risk of a prolonged sensitivity to painful stimuli.

Impaired locomotion associated with tail docking

Some authors who argue against docking claim that the tail is important for balance and agility and, therefore, that docked dogs may be handicapped relative to their tailed conspecifics.[1] This argument seems intuitively plausible but is not supported by empirical evidence. Given that most animal species, particularly those with lifestyles requiring speed and agility, possess tails, one might assume that these limbs confer some kind of evolutionary advantage. Unfortunately, however, no scientific studies have been published comparing the locomotion of docked dogs with those that are undocked. In the absence of such evidence, the 'impaired locomotion' argument against tail docking is unconvincing, particularly when one considers the success of docked dogs in agility competitions and in such demanding activities as hunting, retrieving and herding. It is possible that dogs are just so good at these activities that minor performance deficits due to docked tails are not easily detected. Studies examining the development of agility, balance and general locomotion in docked and undocked pups of the same breed would be required to clarify this issue. A comparative gait analysis of docked and undocked members of the same breed would also be invaluable.

Impaired communication associated with tail docking

Another argument against tail docking is that docked dogs may be socially disadvantaged relative to other dogs, in that they lack one of the main appendages used in canine communication.[2] Again, there is little evidence to support this claim. It is well established that dog tails are used for communication[45] and it is possible that docked dogs, particularly those that are docked close to the base of the tail, might be socially disadvantaged. Indeed, it is often stated that docked dogs engage in a number of compensatory behaviours, such as butt-wiggling (in which the entire back end of the dog wiggles furiously from side to side), in order to communicate. Whether docking may lead to an increase in social misunderstandings, particularly aggression, either from or towards the docked dog, however, has not been rigorously investigated. It would be informative to investigate this issue in adult dogs that receive tail amputation for medical reasons, but no such studies could be located.

A related difficulty concerns the docked dog's ability to communicate with members of the human species, who are typically taught in pet education programs to read dog body language primarily by observing the tail. It is possible that our children are endangered by docked dogs, simply because their ability to communicate with the dog is impaired, although this has not been demonstrated. Studies examining the ability of children to understand dog posture in docked and undocked breeds would be useful in this respect, as would studies comparing the number of bites each year inflicted by docked and undocked dogs, relative to their prevalence in the community.

Summary of arguments against tail docking

From the preceding discussion it can be seen that there are several reasons why the practice of tail docking might be opposed, especially when carried out in its present form. There

seems little doubt that docking causes acute pain in all species studied and, although the magnitude of pain cannot be ascertained, there is no reason to believe that amputation of a limb in a young puppy should be any less painful than amputation of a limb in any other animal, whether infant or adult. The fact that puppies appear to recover quickly from the docking process may indicate that the pain is minimal, but this cannot be tested and the relationship between apparently 'normal' behaviours, such as sleeping and suckling, and pain relief is unknown. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, therefore, docking should perhaps always be carried out after administration of an appropriate anaesthetic and using the best possible technique. Analgesia following docking is also clearly indicated.

Whether docking should be completely banned for the reasons listed above is less certain. Evidence suggesting that docking may be associated with several physical difficulties, locomotor deficits and/or impaired communication skills may be accumulating but, with well controlled studies lacking, it is yet to be convincing. Perhaps the strongest argument against docking is the fact that it may be associated with the presence of neuromas and chronic pain, or increased pain sensitivity, in at least some dogs. This has also not been demonstrated empirically, however, and it is perhaps unlikely that many docked dogs experience significant chronic pain as, even though dogs may mask pain extremely well, it might be expected to affect their behaviour in a systematic way, evident to those who know the species well. At most, then, it might be claimed that there is a weak prima facie case against tail docking on the basis that it may have detrimental effects, even though these have not yet been conclusively demonstrated. Whether this justifies a total ban on the process then depends on whether significant benefits are derived from tail docking, and whether these outweigh the potential for pain and suffering inherent in the procedure.

Arguments in support of tail docking in domestic dogs.

Given prima facie evidence that even a minimal amount of 'harm' is likely to be associated with docking, the burden of proof falls on those who support docking to show that definite benefits outweigh the possible costs. In agricultural species such as lambs, pigs and dairy cows, docking is considered by some to be necessary because it serves some utilitarian function, preventing injury or disease in the docked animals, their conspecifics, or their human handlers.[46] Whether docking achieves these aims, and whether they justify the removal of an animal's tail, are issues for debate elsewhere. The task in this paper is limited to establishing whether there are valid reasons for docking dogs. The main arguments raised by pro-docking lobby groups are considered below.

Maintaining tradition

Tail docking in many dog breeds is an established custom believed to have been introduced some 2000 years ago in order to satisfy various motives. These include primarily functional reasons, such as to prevent damage to vulnerable tail tips in breeds used for hunting and retrieving in dense undergrowth, for ease of manipulation of terriers working in burrows and other confined spaces, and to prevent diseases such as rabies. They also include economic reasons, with some working dogs being docked to prevent the imposition of 'luxury dog' taxes in some circumstances. Some breeds also appear to have been docked initially for primarily aesthetic reasons, while others, representing breeds where some members are born with naturally bobbed tails, were presumably originally docked to preserve breed uniformity.[2]

Some might argue that traditionally docked breeds should remain docked simply to preserve these traditions and to retain the distinctive appearance of the relevant breeds. Indeed, many people who dock claim that they do so mainly in order to comply with the official standard for the breed concerned. This argument from tradition, while popular, seems ethically unconvincing as a justification for tail docking. While it is true that some breeds have traditionally been docked within the limited history of the specific breed, the development of purebred dogs is itself a relatively recent phenomenon. Doubtless, the ancestors of some breeds can be traced back to antiquity, and there are claims that docking was introduced as early as 65 AD.[47] There is little indication that dogs, as they evolved from their wolfish forefathers, emerged sporting a 'traditionally' docked appearance, however, and there is no convincing evidence to suggest that docking was a common procedure in primitive societies, from whose canine companions modern day dogs were developed. Humans living in developed countries cannot use surgical techniques to create a distinctive looking animal and then argue that such a look is natural or even traditional. Dogs were 'traditionally' undocked long before they were 'traditionally' docked and any argument for tail docking purely in terms of retaining tradition is flawed in that it exists only by reference to our own limited cultural history.

The 'traditional' grounds for tail docking should also be evaluated within the context of our current social climate. A persuasive argument against docking tails merely to preserve tradition concerns the fact that when the 'traditionally' docked breeds were being developed, animals were defined by most people purely as human possessions. They enjoyed no legal or moral protection and humans were free to do with them as they liked. The prevalent view, based on the thesis of the French philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650), was that animals were simply mechanical automatons, unable to feel pain or emotions.[48] Vivisection without any form of anaesthesia was widely practiced by scientists and mistreatment of animals was a legal issue only if it impacted on the physical or financial wellbeing of their owners.

The Cartesian philosophical position regarding the status of animals is no longer widely accepted, at least not overtly. Physiological, biochemical, behavioural and psychological similarities between humans and other mammals are now well documented and animals are widely perceived as feeling, and in some cases possibly even thinking, biological organisms, to which humans, as moral agents, owe a substantial duty of care.[49,50] This is reflected in our support of animal welfare organisations and is codified in relevant laws. Given this significant change from the views held by our forebears, recourse to a defence of tail docking purely on the grounds of tradition appears untenable.

It is equally unacceptable in our contemporary context to dock tails simply to comply with a written standard of the kind used by purebred canine bodies in order to define the characteristics of each particular breed. Many breed standards were originally drafted at a time in which there was little knowledge of comparative physiology and in which animal welfare was of little concern. Breed standards, like all written laws and community guidelines, can and do change as cultures evolve and knowledge accumulates, with amendments to breed standards being published on a regular basis. One might be justified in preserving human traditions involving inanimate objects

such as steam trains and clothing styles, and one might like to adhere to written specifications when reproducing historical artefacts. When our traditions and our written codes concern practices involving species capable of pain and suffering, in contrast, they cannot be condoned on this basis alone.

The argument from 'tradition', then, is critically flawed. It reflects both a human arrogance towards history and tradition and a disregard for the changing status of animals within our community. If tail docking in dogs is to be continued then the defenders of the practice have a burden of proof to show that it is justified in terms of some kind of overall gain for either the individual animal or the community, as is claimed to be the case for other docked species, and/or that amputating a dog's tail simply has no significant welfare implications. Having already established that tail docking may indeed have significant welfare implications, the following sections consider whether the procedure may nonetheless be justified by some kind of gain for the individual organism.

Prevention of tail damage

Proponents of tail docking often cite many practical benefits believed to be associated with the procedure, although these purported benefits appear rarely, if ever, to have been demonstrated scientifically.[1,2] One of the most common claims is that some breeds that are traditionally docked tend to engage in activities as adults during which tail damage is likely to be frequent. Docking is argued to be necessary, therefore, to prevent the pain and discomfort associated with adult tail damage. This rationale for tail docking clearly does not condone the widespread practice that exists today, which includes many dog breeds that were traditionally docked for reasons other than preventing injury. Moreover, if docking is to be justified for the purpose of preventing adult tail damage in any breed, two assumptions require empirical support. First, evidence is required to support the claim that these traditionally docked dogs are particularly likely to sustain tail damage if left undocked, and that they are likely to do so in sufficient numbers to justify docking all members of the particular breed. Second, it is necessary to establish that tail damage in adult dogs is likely to cause substantially more suffering than does the docking process.

Unfortunately, persuasive evidence with which to either support or refute such claims is lacking. Since tail docking has been banned in Sweden, there has reportedly been a significant increase in the number of dogs from some breeds presenting to veterinary clinics with tail damage.[51] There are also anecdotal reports of increased tail damage in dogs left undocked in other countries, and the Council for the Promotion of Docked Dogs displays numerous graphic photos of tail damage on their web site.[52] No scientifically controlled studies have been reported, however, and other available anecdotal evidence, suggesting that the incidence of tail damage in European countries remains low, indicates that these few examples may be misleading. Many traditionally docked breeds for which a propensity for tail damage is claimed, simply do not engage in high risk activities. In addition, for almost all breeds that are traditionally docked, a corresponding breed can be found that engages in the same kind of activities but that has traditionally not been docked.[2] This calls into question the veracity of the argument, although it has not yet been established empirically whether some breeds do suffer extensive tail damage as a result of carrying out particular activities or whether some breeds may have specific tail characteristics that render them genuinely more predisposed towards tail damage. This will only be established if controlled scientific comparisons between docked and undocked dogs of the same breed are undertaken.

Perhaps more significantly, the percentage of dogs that engage in traditional activities appears to have declined substantially in our increasingly urban communities, with most dogs now serving primarily as companion animals. While companion dogs, especially those with long thin tails, may sustain tail damage through repeatedly banging their tail on hard indoor surfaces, there is little evidence to suggest that this is a common occurrence. Indeed, one study which examined records from over 12, 000 dogs treated at a university clinic found only a low incidence (47 cases) of tail damage overall. This study found no significant difference in the rate of tail injury (fractures, lacerations, dermatoses, self-trauma and neoplasia) between docked (0.31%) and undocked (0.41%) breeds so the findings do not support the argument that docking serves to reduce tail damage.[53] It should be noted, however, that the study did not contain undocked dogs from customarily docked breeds. As mentioned previously, only a controlled study, including equal numbers of docked and undocked dogs from the same breed, is likely to reveal whether these breeds are particularly prone to tail damage, and whether docking significantly reduces the incidence of injury in such breeds.

Another study, surveying over 2000 visits to an animal emergency clinic in Australia, found only three presentations for tail injuries, all of which reflected difficulties that occurred immediately post docking.[1] It would be useful to supplement this information with similar studies conducted in rural areas, where the number of dogs engaged in high risk activities may be greater, and with the type of controlled study mentioned above. In the absence of such information it is impossible to conclude that tail damage is likely to become a frequent event if docking is ceased or, conversely, to conclude that tail damage will not become more frequent. The percentage of dogs that actually engage in high-risk occupations, and their rate of tail injury relative to those sold as companion animals, must also be ascertained. Until this is done, it is impossible to sustain the argument that all dogs from certain breeds should be docked for the purpose of preventing future tail damage.

Even if it is conceded that a percentage of dogs from some traditionally docked breeds may sustain tail damage as adults if docking ceased, the argument for docking any individual dog on this basis requires the additional assumption that tail damage creates more overall suffering than does the practice of docking. This argument would be strengthened if it was established that tail damage in adult dogs is particularly painful and difficult to treat, compared with the acute, and possibly chronic, pain suffered following neonatal tail docking, but this has not been demonstrated. Until such evidence is available, the argument is moot. It is possible that some dogs are more prone to tail damage, either because of the structure of their tail or because of their traditional occupation, and that tail docking prevents substantial future pain in these dogs. It is equally possible that this is not correct.

Given a presumption against removing animal limbs without convincing evidence to justify such procedures, the absence of appropriate studies in this area represents a significant difficulty for those who support tail docking, even in those breeds that may be expected to sustain tail damage. Indeed, the removal of tails in all members of a dog breed, just because some may sustain tail damage as adults, does not appear justified unless

the degree of suffering is at least suspected to be substantial. Even here, the ethical dilemma is one of weighing potential pain from the possibility of tail damage against certain pain from what may turn out to be an unnecessary preventative measure. As a society we are often comfortable in making such judgements and readily sanction vaccination procedures in order to prevent later illness. With respect to tail docking, however, the judgement seems more akin to routinely removing tonsils or appendices from all infants in order to avoid possible tonsillitis or appendicitis in a few adults later in life. Fewer people would presumably feel comfortable making a decision of this type. Even those who would agree to dock all tails from a particular breed, where a reasonably large number of dogs seem likely to engage in a high risk activity, cannot use this argument to defend tail docking to the extent that it is currently practiced.

Prevention of accumulation of faecal material

Another claimed benefit of docking in some breeds is that it potentially reduces the accumulation of faecal material around the tail area on dogs with excessive coats. Such accumulation, it is argued, is likely to result in significant irritation of the dog by flies and possibly eventual infestation by maggots, as well as considerable inconvenience to the dog's owner.[2] Again, there is little direct evidence to support this claim, although studies involving sheep and cows may be instructive. In one study involving 3000 lambs on seven different farms, half of which were docked in the first week of life, it was found that undocked lambs tended to accumulate slightly more faecal material around the tail area than did their conspecifics, and that undocked lambs did become infested by flies significantly more often than those lambs that were docked.[54] Another recent study, involving dairy cows, found no association between docking and faecal accumulation,[46] however, and earlier studies (cited in Tucker et al[46]) found that docked dairy cattle actually carried a higher fly load than did their undocked conspecifics. In addition, there is evidence that docked cows, unable to use their tail to dislodge flies, engage in several unusual fly avoidance behaviours.[55] The different findings in these studies almost certainly reflect the different species studied, in that the thick wool possessed by sheep is more prone to accumulate faecal matter than the flatter coat of dairy cows. Hence, one might argue that these studies support claims that long-haired dogs, such as Old English Sheepdogs, are most likely to benefit from docking. Those who propose this argument, however, must take into account the many similarly long-haired dog breeds that are not traditionally docked, and the general observation that dogs are rarely, if ever, intensively farmed under conditions that render other coat management systems impractical. If docking is genuinely beneficial to long-haired dogs, then one might argue that all long-haired breeds should be docked and, conversely, that docking should perhaps be restricted to long-haired breeds. Unless docking is conclusively shown to cause no significant pain or suffering and the presence of a tail is demonstrated to be unimportant for other reasons, however, it is difficult to justify removal of a dog's limb for hygiene purposes. Other, less intrusive, options, such as clipping, grooming or a change of diet, clearly exist in nearly all cases.

Maintaining breed quality

Another argument, which is put forward to support a continuation of tail docking in some breeds, concerns the maintenance of breed quality. A ban on tail docking may compromise this in several ways. First, in dog breeds that have been docked for many years, no consideration has been paid to characteristics like tail set or length. A wide variety of appearances may therefore be expected if docking ceased. Individual breeders, trying to develop and maintain a breed 'type', may feel compelled to select their breeding stock on the basis of tail characteristics alone, perhaps resulting in neglect of other important characteristics such as structural soundness or temperament. Breeder selection for traits believed to be desirable has already resulted in enormous difficulties in some breeds. Selection for large heads, for example, has created breeds unable to deliver puppies naturally, while selection for brachycephalic faces has led to breeds unable to exercise or control heat loss effectively. In breeds where some individuals are born with naturally bobbed tails, it has been claimed that selection for shorter and shorter tails, in order to mimic the docked appearance, may lead to a higher incidence of spina bifida and other spinal cord defects. A related argument is that the cessation of docking in some countries, such as Australia, would prevent export of some dogs to overseas countries where docking is accepted. Since overseas sales are typically more lucrative than local sales, this may damage the dog breeding industry in these countries and have indirect effects on the quality of dogs able to be produced.

Possibilities such as this warrant some consideration in the tail docking debate but are not compelling, especially if there are significant welfare concerns associated with the docking process. An increased incidence of spina bifida or any other related health difficulties has not been documented in those countries in which docking has been banned and improved breeder education would seem to provide a potential solution to this possibility. The economic problem may seem more intractable, although the banning of tail docking in several European countries means that undocked dogs from other countries may actually be more desirable in those countries. As with previous arguments, however, it seems difficult to maintain that all members of a particular breed should be docked simply because a handful of dogs might be expected to find homes in countries where docking is practiced. More importantly, performing any surgical manipulation of an individual dog for the purposes of export dollars or for maintaining a breed 'type' seems at odds with the ethical codes adopted by most breeder organisations. These codes typically emphasise that the welfare of individual dogs should be considered in all breeding decisions. They also typically include a clause stating that the breeder will breed only to improve the standard of the breed, and not for any commercial purpose. If there is compelling evidence to suggest that tail docking may compromise the welfare of any given dog, engaging in the practice for profit may inadvertently contravene the ethical codes of the very same breed clubs that promote the practice. Certainly, with respect to the ANKC Code of Ethics[4] discussed previously, any justification for docking other than direct health and welfare benefits is disallowed.

Maximising quality of life for individual dogs

As mentioned previously, a percentage of pups in some traditionally docked breeds are born with tails that are naturally shortened or bobbed. In some breeds, these natural bobs include animals born with misshapen or deformed tails. Tails may be kinked or twisted or simply short and poorly positioned. Breeders who cease docking may find that these dogs are difficult to find homes for, although an appropriate publicity

campaign may result in members of the public being prepared to offer homes to dogs with 'unusual' tails simply because they support an anti-docking policy. It is also possible, however, that there is pain or discomfort associated with the misshapen nerve endings in these deformed tails, and that the dogs, in these cases, might benefit from the docking procedure. This has not been demonstrated as yet, but the argument may provide a defensible therapeutic rationale for docking at least some dogs, on the grounds of the dog's own welfare. It does not, of course, justify docking all members of a breed, most of which will not have deformed tails.

Personal preferences

A final argument in defence of tail docking concerns the fact that some people simply prefer docked dogs. For some, this may be a convenience issue, in that docked animals may be less likely to knock valuable objects from coffee tables or hall stands and less likely to spray mud across the furniture. More common, however, are dog owners and breeders who select their breed on the basis of its distinctive characteristics, including the way the animals look, and who have a personal preference for the docked look. These people may well acknowledge that there is some pain associated with the docking process, that there is a small chance that the dog will experience ongoing physical problems or chronic pain, and that no benefits accrue to the dog directly as a result of tail docking. They insist, however, that the suffering the dog experiences is negligible or at least insignificant and, therefore, that docking can be justified on cosmetic grounds, simply because the dog will look 'better' with no tail.

Whether personal preference is sufficient to justify tail docking depends on other factors. As a community we support the 'rights' of individual members to select the type of dog they own, its gender, coat length and colour, as well as a host of other characteristics. If it were established beyond doubt that tail docking has no welfare implications, then personal preference might justify tail docking, particularly if it meant that dogs, which were otherwise left homeless or in poor homes, found loving and caring owners. On the other hand, a pertinent ethical issue here is not simply whether an individual has the 'right' to physically manipulate the appearance of a pet dog, but what the exercise of this 'right' might say about our community values.

Dogs are an extremely important part of our community and are used by many parents to teach appropriate values to their children. Some couples raise a litter of pups in order to teach their family about nurturing and care and others spend large sums of money on a sick or injured pet rather than have their children think that animals are expendable. Feeding the pet dog is one of the first responsibilities assumed by many children and regular grooming and walking schedules may be used as an enjoyable chore for which the child receives their first pocket money. Dealing responsibly with doggie behavioural challenges can be a useful way of demonstrating to children that they remain valued even when their behaviour is unacceptable, although all too often dumping the inconvenient family pet provides a model of irresponsibility that most children could do without. Pets play a large role in teaching children empathy towards animals, which has been shown to generalise to other situations.[56,57] They also function as important therapeutic agents in many contexts,[58] with visiting dogs becoming a regular sight in Australian nursing homes and hospitals.

If docking results in pain and there are no sufficiently compensating gains *for the animal*, then it may well be a practice that can justifiably be classified as a form of abuse. According to Agnew,[59] definitions of animal abuse typically include three features: that the harm inflicted is socially unacceptable; intentional or deliberate; and unnecessary. Certainly, tail docking appears to fulfil the second and third criteria. Many people would feel justified in arguing that it also fulfils the first. It may be argued, therefore, that a community in which tail docking is condoned, despite fairly convincing evidence that it has no demonstrated benefits and may significantly compromise the welfare of at least some of the dogs involved, provides a paradoxical model of pet dogs. On the one hand, dogs are revered as much loved companions and family pets. On the other, they are seen as objects, able to be bought and sold, disposed of, euthanased, mistreated, exploited and surgically modified at will. While such a perception of animals does persist in many sections of our society, it is neither a defensible nor a desirable one, except within a most perverse form of ethical and moral philosophy. Moreover, since there is an established association between animal abuse and other forms of anti-social behaviour,[60,61] it is possible that a community in which tail docking is condoned on a large scale, purely to satisfy personal preferences, sets a dangerous precedent for at least some of its young members.

Summary and conclusion

In summary then, it seems difficult to argue that tail docking, as the widespread practice that it presently is, is justified. It cannot be defended on the basis of arguments from tradition or to satisfy a breed standard created in another time and place. Moreover, there is no clear evidence that any kind of benefit associated with tail docking exists that can outweigh the potential harm that may be caused to the animals involved. There are several reasons that may be used to support tail docking in some breeds, or at least to justify the docking of specific dogs within those breeds. These reasons concern individual dogs that are expected to engage in activities as adults in which tail damage is encountered on a frequent basis, particularly if appropriate veterinary care is unlikely to be available, those in which accumulation of faecal material may become a health issue, those born with deformed or painfully misshapen tails, and those for which the presence of a docked tail may result in a significantly improved quality of life. In all of these cases tail docking of individual dogs could potentially be justified on utilitarian grounds, but only if the expected benefits outweigh the harm that is potentially associated with the docking process, and also only if adequate anaesthesia and analgesia is provided at the time of docking.

More difficult, if not impossible, to sustain is the argument that tail docking is justified simply because some humans prefer the docked look or find it more convenient to own a tailless dog. This would constitute an acceptable reason for docking only if it was conclusively demonstrated that absolutely no harm is ever associated with the process. On the contrary, although the potential for harm cannot be proven scientifically for philosophical reasons, available evidence strongly suggests that docking may be associated with both acute and chronic pain. Relevant anatomical and physiological differences between dogs and members of our own species are minimal and there is every reason to suspect that even very young pups do experience substantial pain when their tails are removed, and that they continue to experience pain as the normal physiolog-

ical processes known to be associated with limb amputation take place. That the docking process occurs just before the critical socialisation period simply makes the practice more difficult to justify, as does the fact that it may leave some dogs with chronic physical problems and possibly unable to communicate effectively with both conspecifics and humans.

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AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

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Literature Review YES
Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

An **opinion paper unsubstantiated by scientific evidence** published by **Australian anti-docking activist R. Wansborough,** who admits that no studies exists that prove any harm to docked dogs.

The Wansbrough Report

Cosmetic Tail Docking of Dogs' Tails.

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This article was published in the Australian Veterinary Journal Vol 74, No. 1, July 1996. It has been reproduced, by kind permission of the Author.

SUMMARY :

The anatomy of the canine tail and its relationship to the physiological functions of the tail are described and the effect of tail docking on these is discussed. Current knowledge on the physiology and anatomy of pain is described with particular reference to cosmetic tail docking in the neonatal puppy. Recent advances in knowledge about pain and the changes in approach to pain management refute the premise that 'Puppies do not feel pain therefore tail docking is not Inhumane', and also the premise that 'the pain and the effects of tail docking are insignificant.' Six criteria to tell the 'necessity' to dock dogs are presented. The article shows that the reasons advanced for tail docking do not satisfy these criteria and so that docking dogs' tails cannot be justified.

Tail docking is an old custom, which is entrenched in certain dog breeds. This article aims to provide scientific information relevant to the cosmetic tail docking of dogs.

There have been no scientific studies or double blind trials conducted to compare the effects of tail docking in one sample of dogs with a similar sample of undocked dogs. Similarly there have been no studies that measure the initial pain and the ongoing pathological pain inflicted on docked dogs. Due to the phenomena of deafferentation (suppression of afferent nerve impulses) and phantom limb pain, scientific regulatory bodies would not permit such inhumane research. Even without this information from specific scientific research, our current knowledge is sufficient to show the canine tail is an anatomically and physiologically important organ which should not be docked simply because tradition dictates it. Cosmetic tail docking cannot be justified medically or scientifically and recent advances in our knowledge about pain indicate that it should he regarded as an inhumane act.

CRITERIA TO TEST THE 'NECESSITY TO REMOVE OR MODIFY ANY PART OF A DOG.

The following questions have been proposed by Morton (1992) to test the necessity to modify or remove any part of a dog.

1. Is there evidence that leaving the dog intact predisposes them to harmful consequences?

2. Is there evidence that the interference is in the best interests of the dog and will be beneficial to the dog?

3. would the harmful consequences or the benefit occur in a significant proportion of dogs and therefore justify the procedure on all dogs of a particular breed?

4. Does the proposed interference cause greatest harm to the dog than the damage one is trying to prevent?

5. Is there another way with no, or lesser adverse effects that would achieve the same end?

6. Does the increase in 'value' as a result of the interference justify the harm done to the dog?

ANATOMICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

An understanding of the importance of the tail and the con-ditions to which docking can predispose is gained by reviewing the anatomy and the physiology of the tail and the pelvic region. The canine tail usually consists of 20 (6 to 23) highly mobile vertebrae largely enclosed by a very versatile musculature making the various segments, especially the tip capable of finely graded movements. Part of the musculature is formed from muscles associated with the rectum, the anus, and the pelvic diaphragm. The tail is served by 4 to 7, paired

coccygeal nerves. On leaving the spinal canal the branches of these nerves anastomose to form the left and right dorsal and ventral coccygeal trunks which lie on their respective surfaces of the transverse processes of the vertebrae. The dorsal muscles of the tail are direct continuations of the epiaxial musculature of the trunk. The dorsal sacrococcygeal muscles are extensors, while the sacrococcygeus ventralis later- alis and medialis muscles act as flexors or depressors of the tail. These muscles have many tendons that insert from the 5th or 6th coccygeal vertebra then onto the next vertebra and so on to the end of the tail. The coccygeus, levator ani, and the inter-transversarius caudac muscles are lateral flexors of the tail.

The rectococcygeus muscle is composed of external fibres from each side of the rectum with the left and right portions fusing at the level of the 3rd coccygeal vertebra then inserting on the 5th and 6th coccygeal vertebrae. This attachment on the tail serves to support, anchor and stabilise the anal canal and the rectum, preventing them from being pulled cranially by a peristaltic wave. By its contraction, the rectococcygeus muscle can move the anal canal and rectum caudally thus evacuating faecal material (Miller 1969). The pelvic diaphragm is the vertical closure of the pelvic cavity formed by the coccygeal muscles. The coccygeal muscle originates on the ischiatic spine, extends to the lateral surface of the tail and inserts on the 2nd to 5th coccygeal vertebrae The levator ani muscle (m coccygeus medialis) originates on the ilium, pubis and pelvic symphysis, radiates upwards surrounding the genitalia and the rectum and ends on the 4th to 7th coccygeal vertebrae. Besides helping to contain the con-tents of the pelvic cavity the levator ani muscle moves the tail cranially and laterally, presses the tail against the anus and the external genitalia, compresses the rectum and causes the sharp angulation between the 6th arid 7th coccygeal vertebrae which is characteristic for defecation. Only in carnivores does the levator muscle reach the vertebrae of the tail, thus the detri-mental effect of tail docking on the role of this muscle will be more significant in the dog compared with other domestic species.

PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS.

LOCOMOTION.

The tail is important as a means of counter-balance when the dog is carrying out complicated movements such as leaping, walking along narrow structures, or climbing. Tail muscles are also important in stabilising the vertebral column and supporting the action of the extensor muscles of the back as well as those of the croup and buttocks.

DEFÆCATION.

Normally the rectum, anus, and anal canal are devoid of faecal material with the walls in apposition. During defecation the dog assumes a squatting position with elevation of the tail and subsequent relaxation of the coccygeus, the levator ani, and the rectococcygeus muscles. This allows the migrating contractions in the colon to push the faeces distally into the rectum with defecation ensuing. The movement of the tail during the act of defecation has a direct influence in evacuating the rectum and anal canal of the last part of the faecal bolus. The coccygeus and levator ani muscles cross the rectum laterally tending to compress the tube, while the recto-coccygeus shortens the tube. After defecation the muscles return to their normal position with oncomitant obliteration of the empty lumen. If the tail is removed from an immature puppy the muscles of the tail and pelvis may fail to develop to their full potential. Removal of the tail in the mature dog may lead to atrophy and degeneration of these muscles, in addition, if these muscles lose their distal attachments there may be a lessening of the support and anchorage of the rectum and anus. An absence of adequate function of these muscles may result in rectal dilatation, rectal sacculation and faecal incontinence.

PELVIC DIAPHRAGM INTEGRITY.

Perineal hernia involves a breaching of the caudal wall of the pelvic cavity with herniation of the rectum, the abdominal contents or the pelvic contents through an opening bordered by the anal sphincter medially, the coccygeal muscle laterally and the internal obturator ventrolaterally. Any process resultmg in fascial weakening, muscle atrophy, or muscle degeneration may predispose to this weakness in the pelvic diaphragm. Often perineal hernias occur secondary to medical conditions which cause tenesmus with resultant weakening of the pelvic diaphragm. Burrows and Ellison (1989) recorded a predisposition to perineal hernia in those brachycephalic breeds, which traditionally have their tails docked, and suggested that inherent conformational deficiencies may contribute to the disease in these breeds.Canfield (1986) compared long-tailed and docked Corgis and found that the levator ani and the coccygeus muscles did not develop fully in the docked dogs. A relationship with perineal hernia potentially exists, but she considered that further research was required before a categorical statement could be made.

ACQUIRED URINARY INCONTINENCE.

Urinary incontinence in bitches caused by urethral sphincter mechanism ncompetence (SMI), is a multi factorial condition. A recent study (Holt and Thrusfield 1993) noted the increased risk of SMI developing in large breeds but it also concluded that bitches belonging to small breeds had a reduced risk and medium breeds had no increased risk. Breeds identified in this study as having significantly increased risk of developing SMI were the Old English Sheepdog, Rottweiler, Doberman Pinscher, Weimaraner and Irish Setter. A reduced risk was demonstrated in the labrador retriever, and, although the result was not statistically significant, a low risk was observed in the German shepherd. This agreed with the observations of Arnold et al (1989).Holt and Thrusfield (1993) noted 2 consistent association between SMI and tail docking which they interpreted as an indication that docked breeds of whatever size are more likely to develop incontinence than undocked dogs of the same breed. It is well recognised in women that the risk of developing genuine stress incontinence (GSI) is related to pelvic

It is well recognised in women that the risk of developing genuine stress incontinence (GSI) is related to pelvic floor muscle damage during labour. In the bitch the equivalent 'pelvic floor' muscles are the levator ani and coccygeus muscles both of which attach to the tail base, and it is possible that these muscles are atrophied and/or damaged in docked breeds reducing urethral resistance. A similar relationship may exist between tail docking and submissive urinary incontinence in puppies.Holt and Thrusfield (1993) conclude that their results provide some evidence to support the arguments against tail docking and that it would be interesting to determine if the predisposition to urinary incontinence in currently docked breeds such as the old English Sheepdog and Doberman Pinscher would be reduced if they cease to be docked.

COMMUNICATION AND CANINE BEHAVIOUR.

The position of the tail and the way it is moved can signal pleasure, fear, friendliness, dominance, playfulness, defensiveness, inquisitiveness, aggression, nervousness and submissiveness. Thus tail docking can affect the interaction of dogs with other animals and man. Some behaviourists believe the absence of a tail may predispose a dog to show unwarranted aggression to other dogs and man, or that they may be the victim of attacks by other dogs due to their failure to communicate (RJ Holmes personal communication) Dogs are playing an increasingly significant role as pets and companion animals. Their role in the reduction of emotion and stress related diseases in western society is well recognised, as is their important role in companion animal therapy with children, the handicapped and the elderly. Therefore, good, clear communication with 'man's best friend' is of paramount importance and anything that may impair this communication should he avoided. Tail docking is one such thing.

PAIN

Recent advances in our knowledge of pain physiology and anatomy are relevant to the discussion of cosmetic tail docking. Pain is a feeling, a complex summation of nociceptive input, emotion and state of arousal. Physiological pain is normal, has a short duration and can be protective, but pathological pain is abnormal, is often persistent and can be debilitating and counterproductive. Pathological pain is the sensation perceived from the inflammation that accompanies tissue injury or the sensation perceived from damage directly to the nervous system. Clinically, pathological pain is characterised by one or more of the following :

- The presence of sponataneous pain - pain that occurs in the absence of a demonstrable stimulus.
- Widening of the painful area - 'flare reaction.'
- Hyperalgesia - where (the response to a painful stimulus is exaggerated)
- Allodynia - where a normally innocuous stimulus is painful.
- Referred pain - where the pain from injured tissues spreads to intact tissues.
- Sympathetic dystrophy - a pathological interaction between the sensory and the sympathetic nervous systems.

Unlike physiological pain, pathological pain has no thresh-hold. The nervous system is a plastic, modifiable system with a propensity for adaptation and maladaptation and peripheral and central sensitisation are the mechanisms underlying the generation of pathological pain (Dart 1994).

PERIPHERAL SENSITISATION.

Nociceptors (pain receptors) are activated directly by mechanical and thermal stimuli and also by endogenous substances released from inflamed, traumatised and ischaemic tissues. Serotonin, products of the arachidonic cascade, histamine, kinins and acetylcholine are all algogenic (directly pain producing). Prostaglandins and nor-adrenalin may not be directly painful, but sensitise the nociceptors and potentiate the effect of other algogenic substances. Substance P is secreted from the excited or sensitised nociceptors and induces vasodilation, increased vascular permeability, mast cell degranularion and production of unstored inflammatory substances. The formation of this 'sensitising soup' leads to sensitisation of adjacent nociceptors and so the vicious cycle of 'peripheral sensitisation' is set in motion. Sensitised nociceptors can become spontaneously active causing depolarisation of 'dorsal' horn neurons, and thus peripheral sensitisation is one of the phenomena involved in the development of pathological pain.

CENTRAL SENSITISATION.

At the spinal cord level, the balance between the afferent stimuli reaching the dorsal horn and the degree of activity of inhibitory interneurons will determine the strength and frequency of the stimuli registering in the brain. A cascade of intracellular events is initiated and as a result identical but repeated stimuli can evoke a larger and larger response because the potentials are summated. The dorsal horn neurons become hyperexcitable this reaction is termed 'dorsal horn wind up'. The hyperexcitability of the dorsal horn neurons increases the activity in preganglionic sympathetic neurons and as a result postganglionic sympathetic efferents release noradrenalin which sensitises primary afferent terminals. These in turn initiate central sensitisation, which further increases sympathetic outflow and this increases afferent input. So another vicious cycle is Set in motion. Pathological pain can he seen to he the result of peripheral and central sensitisation.

INCORRECT MYTHS ABOUT PAIN.

Several myths about pain have been propagated for years and form the basis on which cosmetic tail docking has been justified and allowed to he perpetuated.

MYTH 1 - Animals don't feel pain like humans. This is illogical. Anatomically and physiologically mammals

(and possibly all vertebrates) have the same neural transmitters, receptors, pathways and higher brain centres. Whilst it is true that animals may show different signs of pain, we cannot deny that they feel pain in the same way humans do (Fleeman 1995). Because of the physiological similarity between mammals, it is valid to use animals, including dogs, as models for human medical research. The converse applies in that man can be used as a model for advancing veterinary knowledge. Similarity between the human and canine nervous systems means that we can assume that anything causing pain in man will cause a painful sensation of similar intensity in the dog.The pain threshold has been determined to be approximately equal in humans and animals (Fleeman 1995).

MYTH 2 - Lack of myelination is an index of immaturity in the neonatal nervous system and therefore neonates are not capable of pain perception. We know this is no longer correct, in fact the contrary occurs. Anatomical studies have shown that the density of cutaneous nociceptive nerve endings in the late foetus and newborn animal may equal or exceed that of adult skin (Anand and Cart 1989). Nociceptive impulses are conducted via unmyelinated and thinly myelinated fibres. The slower conduction velocity in neonatal nerves resulting from incomplete myelination is offset by the shorter interneuronal and neuromuscular distances that the impulse has to travel. It has been shown, using quantitative neuroanatomical methods, that nerve tracts associated with nociception in the spinal cord and brain stem are completely myelinated up to the thalamus during gestation (Anand and Cart 1989). Further development of the pain pathways occurs during puppyhood when there is a high degree of 'brain plasticity.'The development of descending inhibitory pain pathways in the dorsal horn of the spinal cord and the sensory brain stem nuclei also occurs during this period, therefore painful and other experiences during this period may determine the final architecture of the adult pain system.

THE PAIN OF TAIL DOCKING.

Tail docking involves the removal of all or part of the tail using cutting or crushing instruments. Muscles, tendons, 4 to 7 pairs of nerves and sometimes bone or cartilage are severed. The initial pain from the direct injury to the nervous system would be intense and at a level that would not be permitted to be inflicted on humans. The subsequent tissue injury and inflammation, especially if the tail is left to heal as an open wound will produce the algogenic substances, the 'sensitising soup' and the 'dorsal horn wind up' required for peripheral and central sensitisation and the development of ongoing pathological pain. Puppies are usually subjected to this pain and trauma at 2 to 5 days of age when the level of pain would he much greater than an adult would experience because the afferent stimuli reaching the dorsal horn from a greater density of sensitised cutaneous nociceptors will exceed that of the adult and the strength and frequency of painful stimuli reaching the brain will he greater because inhibitory pain pathways will not be developed.

- ***The whimpering and the 'escape response' (continual movements) exhibited by most puppies following tail docking, are evidence that they are feeling substantial pain. Animals tend to be more stoic than humans due to an inherent preservation instinct.***

- ***Because some puppies do not show signs of intense suffering, it does not mean that the pain inflicted on them has not registered in their central nervous system.***

Cosmetic tail docking is most often performed without any anaesthesia or analgesia and only manual restraint is used. General anaesthesia, if used, produces unconsciousness and muscle relaxation but does not affect the sensory nerves and will not necessarily prevent 'dorsal horn wind' up or the development of pathological pain. Movement of the patient may be controlled, but sensory stimuli will still register in the higher centres of the central nervous system. On recovery from anaesthesia peripheral and central sensitisation, the mechanisms underlying the generation of pathological pain will still he present.

General anaesthesia in very young animals entails a high degree of risk Local anaesthesia, because of the practical difficulties of injecting into such a small area and the potential for systemic toxicosis, also has a high risk. The maximum dose of lignocaine in the dog is 5 mg/kg making use of the 2% (20 mg/ml.) solution urealistic in the average puppy up to a week of age. Use of local anaesthetics to which adrenalin has been added could increase the risk of cardiovascular and CNS problems occurring, although some proponents of tail docking recommend the use of these solutions to prolong analgesia and to help control haemorrhage (RA Zammit in a submission prepared for the New South Wales Canine Council). Understanding the phenomena of peripheral and central sensitisation and their role in the generation of pathological pain, has changed the approach to pain management. The emphasis is now on preventing pain and treating pain before it occurs.

About 90% of human amputees suffer pathological pain in the form of phantom limb pain. Docked dogs similarly may suffer phantom limb pain but, if their inherent stoicism masks the symptoms, this may he misdiagnosed or go undiagnosed. The currently recommended anaesthetic procedure for a human undergoing surgery where major peripheral nerves are to he severed, would involve epidural anaesthesia for 48 h before surgery and 24 h after surgery.local anaesthesia around the surgical site at the time of surgery and for 24 h after surgery.

OTHER POTENTIAL SEQUELAE FROM TAIL DOCKING.

Other sequelae that may result from tail docking are :-

- Haemorrhage or ischaemia.
- Infection, gangrene, toxaemia/septicaemia.
- Meningitis.
- Hypoglycaemia or hyperglycaemia

- Hypoglycaemia or hyperglycaemia.
- Amputation neuroma formation.
- Caudal adhesions with neurodermatitis.
- Deafferentation, causing loss of sensory perception from the tail.

Many of these can potentially produce a state of shock which may prove fatal to the neonatal puppy.

SOME REASONS FOR TAIL DOCKING PRIOR TO THE 19TH CENTURY

- To produce bobtail puppies - Lamarcks theory of acquired characteristics was still widely believed and people thought the new born puppies would look like their parents.
- To prevent rabies - it was thought that docked dogs were less likely to develop rabies.
- To avoid tax - docked dogs did not attract tax.
- To strengthen the back and increase speed.
- To prevent being bitten when ratting or fighting.
- To make better 'sport' of bear baiting and dog fighting.

These reasons from which the custom of tail docking evolved are no longer valid. *(Note - Have they ever been valid?)*

REASONS GIVEN TO JUSTIFY TAIL DOCKING TODAY

- ***Prevention of injury in hunting and working dogs***.

Most dogs in the breeds that are generally docked are kept as pets and companion animals and are never used for hunting or working. The most popular breeds used in the field or paddock are Labradors, Kelpies, Border Collies and Cattle dogs, none of which are required to have their tails docked.

- ***Prevention of injury in short coated dogs especially those with exuberant and ebullient temperaments***.

This is inconsistent because not all breeds in this category are required to be docked, for example the Dalmatian and the Labrador. The boxer is often cited a dog requiring docking for this reason, but some professional dog trainers note a difference in the behaviour of this and other traditionally docked breeds when they are left undocked and 'urge and encourage all breeders to forget about what has happened in the past and now change to keep their dogs' tails on" (Tucker 1994).

A survey in Edinburgh by Darke et al (1985) over a 7 year period showed that there was insufficient evidence of statistical significance, to suggest that there is a positive association between tail injuries and an undocked tail and that tail docking could not be recommended as a measure to prevent tail injuries in any dog population similar to the predominantly urban population surveyed.

Of the first 1000 consultations at the North West Animal Emergency Clinic in Sydney none involved tail injury cases. Between December 1991 and September 1992 there were 2350 consultations only 3 of which involved tail injuries. All three of these cases were related to tail docking, the first case involved 12 three day old Rottweiler pups which were still haemorrhaging 6 hours after being docked and required suturing. The other two cases involved single pups one of which was bleeding and the other had become infected (From records of the North West Animal Emergency Centre, Baulkharn Hills, NSW.)

Not all tail injuries require amputation, so tail docking may be routinely performed on 100% of puppies of certain breeds as a measure to prevent injuries that would only require a bandage, some antiseptic or simply natural healing.

- **Hygiene**

Dogs such as the Old English sheepdog, poodle and silky terrier would foul themselves and the average pet owner would not have the time, patience or skill to carry out proper coat care. This is inconsistent because other breeds with the same potential problem (for example the Bearded collie, Pekingese, Maltese terrier and Afghan) are not required to be docked. Regular clipping of long-haired areas and 'feathers' is far less invasive and painful than tail docking and has far fewer adverse effects. Poor breed selection, lack of education in dog husbandry or irresponsible pet ownership should not be justification for tail docking.

TRADITION OR CUSTOM

Submitting dogs to a procedure known to be painful and which may have harmful consequences, just to satisfy a centuries old custom, cannot he justified in a humane society.

CONCLUSION

Cosmetic tail docking cannot be justified on scientific or medical grounds. Unless pecuniary or traditional reasons are to take priority over the welfare of the animal, then the criteria to justify removal of a dogs tail are not satisfied. The tail is not merely an inconsequential appendage. It is an anatomically and physiologically sign significant structure which has many biological functions that should not he underestimated. Tail docking can

predispose the dog to detrimental consequences including intense, initial pain and continuing pain related, neurological problems. Tail amputation should only be performed on those dogs whose tail or associated structures have been injured or where there is occult pathology of this appendage. If tail amputation is indicated as a therapeutic measure, appropriate anaesthetic and surgical techniques should be employed. The neonate is anatomically and physiologically able to and in fact does feel pain. Therefore veterinarians who wish to be seen as caring professionals and as the guardians of animal welfare must stop cosmetic tail docking and actively oppose anyone else continuing the painful practice.

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AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

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SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Refers to a **now-defunct** page on the UK DEFRA website (Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) – an article which contained a review of "scientific aspects and **veterinary opinion" on legislation banning tail docking** in the UK and supported by **animal rights extremists, including anti-sealer and anti-docking activist, D. Morton.**

Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

INFORMATION ON DOG TAIL DOCKING PROVIDED FOR THE ANIMAL WELFARE DIVISION

A review of the scientific aspects and veterinary opinions relating to tail docking in dogs

Summary

This paper briefly reviews docking in farm species as a basis for comparison with the historical, anatomical, behavioural, and current views on tail docking in dogs in the UK. Several aspects of pain in dogs relevant to tail docking are described as are current veterinary attitudes to the procedure.

1. Introduction

1.1 Docking is the term describing the shortening of an animal's tail by amputation; the removal of all/part of the tail. It is possible to carry it out in cattle and calves, sheep and lambs, pigs and piglets, puppies and dogs, and in horses.

1.2 It is currently and routinely practised in UK agriculture only in lambs and less so in piglets. In the UK it is prohibited in horses (even docked horses from other countries may not be landed in the UK without specific permission), cattle and calves, and generally in older or adult farmed or companion animals unless, following the specific intervention of a veterinary surgeon, such a surgical operation under anaesthetic is required in cases of physical injury or disease for the wellbeing of an individual animal, where such injury or disease cannot be treated or repaired without surgical amputation.

2. Docking in dairy cattle

2.1 This practice originated in New Zealand. It is currently practised in adult cattle New Zealand, Australia, USA and Canada whilst docking in calves is allowed in Ireland and Australia.

2.2 Field grazing animals produce looser faeces and docking is alleged to be a hygienic measure in reducing the somatic cell count as well as mastitis and to reduce the faecal contamination of milk (Barnett *et al* 1999). Despite extensive investigative studies in Canada, researchers have been unable to substantiate these alleged benefits (CVMA 2002). There are concerns that docked cows' ability to use their tail to deter flies is compromised (Hemsworth *et al* 1995, Petrie 1994) and observations have also been made of behavioural changes resulting from tail docking (Clark 2002). There are similar concerns for chronic conditions that may result in infection, pain (Petrie

1994), neuroma formation (Barnett *et al* 1999) and phantom pain (CVMA,2002). Differences in diet can affect faecal consistency and thus more research is required to determine the benefits, if any, to dairy cattle.(Clark 2000). Some opinion states that it is a move to improve the comfort and convenience of milkers rather than dairy cows (CVMA, 2002; Barnett et al 1999). Professional veterinary and public opinions in Australia and New Zealand indicate strong feelings against this practice.

3. Docking in sheep

3.1 Adult ewes of mountain breeds (eg. Scottish Blackface) have long undocked tails so that the udder is protected from chilling and possibly from mastitis in bad weather. Tail shaking in mountain breeds on poorer low quality grazing often occurs at defaecation to spread the usually well-formed faecal pellets. However, sheep reared on lush lowland pastures produce softer, sometimes liquid faeces which can accumulate around the perineal area of rectum, tail and upper hind limbs; this invites fly strike and subsequent myiasis (infestation with maggots which eat the tissues beneath the skin). Tail docking in such circumstances is acknowledged as a preventive hygienic procedure which does contribute to the potential welfare of such sheep. Similarly, in lambs born on the same type of pasture/grazing tail docking is also carried out.

3.2 The common methods of docking lambs' tails using rubber rings, Burdizzo forceps, cutting with a knife/snippers or cautery iron, have all aroused significant welfare concerns. Evidence for distress following application of rubber rings has been reported (Shutt et al 1988, Mellor and Murray 1989). Neuroma formation (disorganised nerve regrowth) (French and Morgan 1992) has also been noted in association with irregular innervation and was taken to suggest that increased sensitivity or chronic pain might be present for some significant time following docking. Some may consider the observation that tail docking in lambs has been done traditionally not to be an acceptable answer for allowing its continuation. Considerable data on pain in farm animals has been reported from MAFF sponsored studies (Molony and Kent 1997).

4. Docking in piglets

4.1 Tail biting in pigs reflects the natural curiosity of the species which investigates almost all objects by either foraging and rooting behaviour with the snout or a tentative chewing with the mouth, or both. Although the cause(s) are probably multifactorial it is commonplace with intensive pig farming practices in which animals are crowded together with no or minimal distractions to occupy their innate behaviour. It is accepted that where changes to husbandry have not resolved the problem then docking is a pre-emptive action to obviate not only the welfare considerations associated with tail biting but also the potentially serious damage to the carcass that can follow it.

4.2 Routine tail-docking in piglets is prohibited in EU law by the Pigs Directive (91/630/EEC) which has been implemented in the UK by the Welfare

of Livestock Regulations 1994. Exceptions are allowed, however, where there is on-farm evidence that tail biting has occurred as a result of failure to dock.

4.3 Docking is done by the breeder/farmer within the first few days after birth without anaesthetic. Neuromas (disorganised nerve regeneration) and regressive peripheral nerves suggesting increased sensitivity have been reported after docking (Simonsen *et al* 1991), but no behavioural studies have been conducted.

4.4 The current level of docking at 75-80% could be construed as a reflection of the inappropriate management systems currently in place in the pig industry and that the problem should be solved with more humane farming methods. However, tail biting behaviour does occur in pigs kept in apparently ideal conditions confirming that the habit is complex in its origins.

5. Docking in dogs

5.1 Background in the UK

5.1.1 Docking is carried out in the UK when new born (neonatal) pups of certain breeds, such as spaniels, poodles and terriers, are docked to ostensibly prevent injury to the tail in later, usually adult, life, or to improve hygiene by preventing faecal fouling with subsequent risk of infection or fly-strike. This type of docking is described by some as prophylactic or non-therapeutic docking and thus the dog conforms to the currently accepted breed or type physical standards. The procedure may be performed, usually with scissors, by a veterinary surgeon or by a dog breeder using tail bands. Some docking of adult dogs may also occur for veterinary clinical reasons usually relating to tail injuries from accidental trapping tails in doors etc., and such operations are done under anaesthetic by a veterinary surgeon.

5.2 Anatomical information

5.2.1 The tail is not a limb but is an appendage; it is the distal section of the spinal column and comprises 20 (6-23)caudal or coccygeal vertebrae, muscle, nerves and blood vessels. The muscular structure and activity are an integral part of the normal bodily shape and function, especially in the perineal region. The insertion of the left and right sides of the *rectococcygeus* onto the 5th and 6th coccygeal vertebrae serves to support, anchor and stabilise the anal canal and the rectum, preventing them from being pulled cranially by a peristaltic wave. The contracting *rectococcygeus* can move the anal canal and rectum caudally to evacuate faecal material (Miller 1969). Similarly, the *levator ani* muscle helps to contain the contents of the pelvic cavity, moves the tail laterally and cranially, presses the tail against the anus and external genitalia, compresses the rectum and in altering the angle between the 6th and 7th vertebrae, also aids in defaecation. It is suggested that removal of the tail in an immature puppy may lead to improper development of these muscles (Canfield 1986) and even if in a mature dog, the reduced support for the rectum and anus can lead to rectal dilatation or sacculation and faecal

incontinence. Certainly some breeds such as the Old English sheepdog and Doberman Pinschers are know to show urinary incontinence (Holt and Thrusfield 1993) whilst brachycephalic breeds show a predisposition to perineal herniation (Burrows and Ellison 1989), sequelae associated with post tail-docking and other conditions. A relationship has also been suggested between tail docking and submissive urinary incontinence in puppies (Holt and Thrusfield 1993).

5.2.2 The tail starts at the root where it joins the sacral region and the insertion is the junction of the tail butt to the croup. This has many variations such that separate breeds of dog carry their tail at a different angle to others – low in Cocker Spaniels for example, high in Afghan, Borzoi and Saluki hounds, and there are many different terms to describe the particular carriage or set of a dog's tail according to the breed; natural Schipperke tails can be small stubs, curled like a Keeshond's or held out like a German Shepherd's (Alsatian), (Spira 2002).

5.3 Behavioural and social aspects in dogs with tails

5.3.1 Posture together with vocalisation are means by which both many species of animals, including dogs and humans, demonstrate their individual and collective attitudes and relationships. The behaviour of dogs, including posture and vocalisation, has been extensively studied (Hafez 1969, Fox 1969,1979) .

5.3.2 The tail in a dog is used as a counter-balance in various locomotory activities. The tail muscles not only support the muscles of the croup and hind quarters generally but also stabilise the longer length of the vertebral column (Wansborough1996).

5.3.4 Dogs displaying an erect posture and raised slowly wagging tail , often accompanied with low growls, are trying to intimidate by portraying themselves as larger and more powerful, thereby establishing a dominance over other dogs or similarly, to warn off other approaching/encroaching animals including humans. Such physical display may change to one of submission in which the tail is lowered and curves low between the hind legs with rapid wagging, to normal acceptance of equals with rapid tail wagging or alternatively, continuing to show the raised rigid tail with even further aggressive moves with possibly fighting and death (Darwin 1872/1965, Lindsay 2000). Coloured tips on the tails of some breeds make such physical signals easier to read between both individuals and social packs.

5.3.5 In all cases the tail is a very important indicator of the agonistic mood of the dog(s) concerned and is easily seen from some distance away (Lorenz 1952) Thus a dog with a tail is able to express its emotional state, assertion of social status, acceptance of a subordinate or equal position, or willingness to fight. It has been suggested that the absence of a tail may, in some instances, predispose a dog to unwarranted aggression (Wansborough 1996) and this particular viewpoint merits investigation.

5.4 Historical comments on tail docking in dogs

5.4.1 It is suggested that evidence obtained and verified in the Near East (Reed, 1959), that dogs share with goats, the distinction of being the earliest domesticated animals. Dogs offer the greater number of varieties, some 500 breeds, than any other species of domestic animals (Hafez 1969) and the large differences in physical size, behaviour and temperament notwithstanding, there has been considerable and successful interbreeding. As an even closer association with man developed in early times it is possible than those animals with vicious temperaments were killed by man, thus beginning the first deliberate process of selection for unwanted attributes.

5.4.2 There are several reasons for which dogs were docked in early times – to prevent rabies, strengthen the back and increase running speed, prevent bites when ratting, fighting or baiting. Docking of tails on farmers' or drovers' dogs used for herding and driving cattle and sheep originated in early Georgian times in England as it exempted the owner from a tax levied upon working dogs with tails. Many other types or breeds of dogs were also similarly docked to avoid this tax and although the tax was repealed in 1796 the habit of docking has persisted until modern times. Short-tailed dogs around that period were called curs and gave rise to the term curtailing, meaning to cut short. It is important to note that analgesia, anaesthetics, surgery and veterinary science itself were quite undeveloped at that time, and it is reasonable to infer that considerable pain and suffering were experienced by the docking process.

5.4.3 Thomas Berwick, the naturalist and engraver, noted in 1811 that some dogs were whelped with short tails as if cut off and called them self-tailed dogs. Scientists accept that although the natural development of any species is a continuous process, selective breeding is required for success in obtaining certain desired traits or characteristics, both physical and behavioural. Thus, stumpy-tailed cattle dogs in Australia being descended from those famous English cattle dogs called *Smithfield heelers* seen in and around Smithfield meat market in earlier times were transported to Australia with their owners They have been cross-bred using short-tailed dogs of that type by mating with dingos to give litters either without any tails or with short stumpy tails called *Timmin's biters* after their keenness to bite (STCD). Pups are born with tiny stumpy tails which may not exceed four inches in length to conform to the breed standard. Thus, careful breeding for the physical attribute of a short tail can be achieved without compromising other facets of the breed, in particular, its ability to work hard at herding.

5.5 Current comments on tail docking in dogs

5.5.1 The Anti-Docking Alliance (2000) state that some 52 breeds of dog in the UK are still being currently docked. Those in favour of docking state that it prevents tail injury in later life particularly in working dogs. However, it must be accepted that although many of today's breeds are historically descended from working dogs, in actual fact true working animals constitute only a very small portion of dogs within the UK and yet even for dogs of those breeds

serving as pet/companion animals, docking continues. It is also both improper and unsubstantiated to suggest that all puppies in any litter, working or non-working, will suffer tail injury in later life and thus should all be docked soon after birth as a precautionary measure. A seven year survey conducted by the University of Edinburgh Veterinary School showed insufficient evidence of statistical significance to suggest a positive association between tail injuries and undocked tails; tail docking could not be recommended as a preventive measure in any comparable predominantly urban population (Tucker 1994).
Not all injured tails require surgical amputation and basic first aid would probably be adequate in most cases.

5.5.2 Arguably the most obvious undocked working dogs in the UK are foxhounds and sheepdogs which pursue an extremely active and physically demanding life in which they hunt and work through all kinds of different landscape, including woodland and scrub. There appears to be no evidence, scientific or anecdotal, that they suffer damaged tails.

5.5.3 Those who shoot and use spaniels as gun dogs insist the risk of serious tail damage is high due to the rapid wagging of the tail by an active dog together with the type of dense cover , scrub and brambles, through which the dogs work. Yet the pendant ears of spaniels should surely be liable to similar damage in the undergrowth and the long hair of their coats pick up burrs, twigs etc in the same way, and yet there are no comments on injuries or damage sustained on ears and body generally (ref: Section 9.5 and 9.6).

5.5.4 Spaniels (Sussex, Cocker, Springer, Clumber, Field, Brittany, Boykin), sheepdogs, Old English (bob-tail) and terriers (Norfolk, Airedale, Lakeland, West Highland, Jack Russell, Wire-Haired Fox and Wheaten etc.,) continue to be docked and yet there are anomalies within each variety.

5.5.5 Irish and American Water Spaniels, and Portuguese water dogs are all undocked, as are Cavalier King Charles. Many large breeds that originally were guard dogs for sheep flocks similar to the Old English such as the German Shepherd (Alsatian), Briard, Puli, Maremma, Bearded Collie, Kuvasz, Akbash, Bernese Sennenhund and Pyrenean, all retain their full tails. Finally, among terriers the Manchester, Bedlington, Bull, Staffordshire Bull, Dandie Dinmont and Skye also remain undocked.

5.5.6 Border terriers may be docked or remain undocked; they are described as being trained to kill foxes and go to ground. If they are undocked and yet do go to ground this directly refutes the commonly held view of working terrier owners that docking is essential to allow dogs to turn in confined spaces underground.

5.5.7 Parson Jack Russell terriers were originally bred for the same purpose. of fox hunting. The breed or type standard described by the Parson Russell Terrier Club on 1st August 2000, states that the tail is customarily docked *yet can also be full and undocked*, and still be regarded as a true Parson Russell terrier. This latter remark similarly impugns comments from breeders, the dog-

owning general public and some veterinary surgeons on what appear to be fixed and inflexible breed/type physical standards.

5.5.8 It is apposite to note that the fox, as their quarry, carries a full natural tail and yet manages to live and turn round satisfactorily below that same ground. There is no scientific evidence or anecdotal comment to show that foxes suffer tail injuries related to their physical form or behaviour.

5.5.9 Afghan hounds, Bearded collies, Maltese terriers and Silky terriers all have long haired coats and tails, and do not require docking to obviate faecal fouling of the perineal region, but rather proper and careful grooming which can include clipping hair in that region by the owner. This is non-invasive, less painful and indicative of a better approach to animal welfare.

5.5.10 It should be noted that the British Kennel Club have developed standards for breeds which incorporate both docked and undocked specifications for the tail.

6. Aspects of pain in dogs

6.1 The sensation of pain is a response to a noxious stimulus and should elicit withdrawal reflex/escape and cardiovascular/inflammatory responses (Sneddon and Gentle, 2002).

6.2 Many people are unwilling to accept that animals can feel pain as they believe that animals are incapable of feeling emotions that are similar to those in humans (Sneddon and Gentle 2002). This bizarre attitude is illogical and clearly unsound. It is now widely accepted that animals do experience pain. The 1999 EU Treaty of Amsterdam recognises that animals are sentient beings, that is - they do have feelings. The management of pain in animals is an important role in the veterinary profession (Flecknell and Waterman-Pearson 2000).

6.3 Mammals, including dogs and humans, possess the same neural transmitters, receptors, pathways and higher brain centres (Wansborough 1996) and whilst animals may show different signs of pain (Fleeman 1995) it is clear they do feel pain in the same way as man, and the pain threshhold has been determined to be the same in both dog and man (Fleeman 1995).

6.4 <u>Acute pain</u> is abrupt in onset and relatively short in duration; it may be caused by traumatic injury or surgery etc. Such pain produces a stress response but usually does not lead to distress as the insult is short-lived; it is alleviated by analgesics and associated distress may be responsive to tranquilizers (National Research Council 1992). Acute pain lasts a few hours/days and should not outlast the actual healing process (Molony and Kent 1997).

6.5 Protagonists of docking insist that puppies do not feel pain when amputation of the tail takes place within a few days of birth and that the temporary discomfort, if any, is soon dispelled as many puppies become quiet afterwards and search for the dam's teats in order to suckle. It is uncommon

for either analgesia or anaesthesia to be used and opponents of docking believe it is quite obvious that puppies do feel acute pain at docking. The initial pain from the direct injury to the nervous system caused by cutting or crushing the tail of a neonatal puppy would be intense and at a level that would not be permitted to be inflicted upon a human (Wansborough 1996). Abnormal vocalisation characterised by either whimpering or squealing with wriggling of the tail stump or the whole body, and sometimes urination, are common reactions. Merely because some puppies cease making noises soon afterwards cannot be construed as an indication that any pain has stopped as animals tend to be more stoic than humans due to an inherent preservation instinct (Wansborough 1996).

6.6 Subsequent inflammation in an unclosed wound following docking together with the production of algogenic (pain producing) substances and hyperexcitation of the dorsal horn pathway can lead ultimately to pathological chronic pain.

6.7 Chronic pain is slow in onset, its intensity is inconstant and is more likely to lead to distress and maladaptive behaviour; it is not generally totally alleviated by analgesics but associated distress may be alleviated by tranquilizers.

6.8 Post-amputation neuromas, better described as abnormal regeneration or hyperplasia of nerves, have been reported in dogs. Caudal pain associated with adhesions at the site of docking has also been described in dogs (Carr 1979, Gross and Carr 1990). Pathological pain is associated with the inflammatory response to tissue damage or the sensation perceived from damage directly to the nervous system and has no threshold (Wansborough 1996). It is characterised by a range of components:

- allodynia (a normal innocuous stimulus is painful);
- flare reaction (widening of the painful area);
- referred pain (pain from injured tissues spreads to intact tissues);
- spontaneous pain (pain occurs without a demonstrable stimulus);
- sympathetic dystrophy (pathological interaction between sensory and sympathetic nervous systems).

However, there is no clearly defined evidence that pathological pain occurs in dogs with docked tails.

6.9 There is no tangible evidence of so-called ghosting or phantom pain in dogs after docking or in animals generally. This may be because such conditions in man are associated with loss of a limb rather than an appendage, and usually contain auto-descriptions of the condition with a significant psychological component. For humans to assume that animals also experience phantom pain could be construed as another anthropomorphic presumption, although Wansborough (1996) does describe sensation perceived from damage to the nervous system as one cause of pathological pain and further, suggests that stoicism in dogs may mask phantom pain such that misdiagnosis or failure to diagnose may occur.

6.10 If the practice of docking tails as is currently conducted was proposed as an experimental procedure then it would be subjected to the requirements contained in Chapter 2 Section; 2.1 The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; which regulates any experimental or other scientific procedure applied to a "protected animal" [Section 1] that may have the effect of causing that animal pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm [Section 2]. A procedure so defined by the Act is referred to in this Guidance as a "regulated procedure". Thus the Act would not allow the procedure of tail docking in puppies without the use of an anaesthetic.

7. Veterinary professional opinion within and without the UK

7.1 The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has instructed veterinary surgeons not to dock dogs tails since 1996. Some veterinary surgeons do, nevertheless, continue to dock puppies tails ostensibly to offset welfare concerns by preventing it being done by lay people, whilst other veterinary surgeons continue to insist it is a justifiable prophylactic procedure. Continuing correspondence in the Veterinary Record demonstrates the polarised opinions owned by the veterinary profession in the UK (Holmes 2002, Blakeway 2002).

7.2 The British Small Animal Veterinary Association (1995) and World Small Animal Veterinary Association (August 2001) followed suit in agreeing to a ban on prophylactic docking.

7.3 Enquiries have been made to the clinical departments of UK veterinary schools to see if they have data on dog tail injuries; Professor Sullivan of the University of Glasgow has stated that he has seen probably two or three injured tails in some 60-70,000 dogs over a 20 year period; [Comments awaited from other vet schools].

7.4 In an extensive veterinary scientific evaluation of tail docking in dogs Wansborough (1996) tested the six criteria proposed by Morton (1992):

" *to test the necessity to remove or modify any part of a dog":*

- Is there evidence that leaving the dog intact predisposes it to harmful consequences ?;
- Is there evidence that the interference is in the best interests of the dog and will be beneficial to the dog?;
- Would the harmful consequences or the benefit occur in a significant proportion of dogs and therefore justify the procedure on all dogs of a particular breed?;
- Does the proposed interference cause greater harm to the dog than the damage one is trying to prevent?;
- Is there another way with no, or lesser, adverse effects that would achieve the same end ?, and
- Does the increase in "value" as a result of the interference justify the harm done to the dog?.

7.5 He concluded that submitting dogs to a procedure known to be painful and which may have harmful consequences, just to satisfy a centuries old custom, cannot be justified in a humane society. Cosmetic tail docking cannot be justified from a veterinary medical or scientific viewpoint and recent advances in our knowledge about pain indicate that docking should be regarded as an inhumane act.

8. Conclusion

The arguments put forward by those who wish docking to be continued are unsound from a scientific viewpoint, are contrary to accepted standards for the welfare of the dog(s) and serve only to contribute to artificial physical breed standards.

This review of the literature allows the following statements to be made with reference to tail docking in dogs:

- The removal of a tail, whole or in part, from a breed or type of dog that is born with a full tail, deprives the dog of a major body appendage and can result in behavioural changes in individual dogs;
- Tail docking definitely causes pain in neonatal puppies; neither anaesthetics nor post-surgical analgesics are routinely used;
- Chronic pain after tail docking in dogs is not supported by firm data derived from scientific studies;
- There is no scientific evidence that puppies/dogs show phantom limb pain following tail docking;
- Post docking complications of infection and disorganised nerve re-growth with increased sensitivity may occur;
- Tail docking is considered by some to prevent future tail injury, faecal soiling and myiasis.
- Tail docking could be allowed to continue, but performed only by a veterinary surgeon in cases of tail injury, malformation or disease, for the welfare of an individual dog where the normal remedial treatment is unsuccessful, or if it deemed necessary to prevent future injury.

9. Legislation against dog tail docking in Europe and other countries

9.1 The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (ETS No. 125) was open for signature on 13 November 1987 and came into force on 1 May 1992 – (ECPPA).

Article 3 - Basic principles for animal welfare
- (1) Nobody shall cause a pet animal unnecessary pain suffering or distress.

Article 10 - Surgical operations

- (1) Surgical procedures for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a pet animal or for other non-curative purposes shall be prohibited and, in particular (a) the docking of tails etc;

Exceptions to these prohibitions shall be permitted only: (a) if a veterinarian considers non-curative procedures necessary either for veterinary medical reasons or for the benefit of any particular animal;

- (3) Operations in which the animal will or is likely to experience severe pain shall be carried out under anaesthesia only by a veterinarian or under his supervision.

Article 21 – Reservations
- (1) Any State, may at the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance or accession, declare that it avails itself of one or more reservations in respect of Article 6 and Article 10, paragraph 1, sub-paragraph a. No other reservation may be made.

9.2 Switzerland banned docking in 1988 – currently only docked dogs over 5 months old can be imported.

9.3 Finland signed the ECPPA in 1991, ratified in 1991 and brought it into force on 1st July 1992 but with a reservation on tail docking in dogs; Finland has banned all docked dogs from competing in shows but authorities are concerned that some exhibitors are exporting their animals to countries where docking is allowed, then re-importing them.

9.4 Israel banned docking/cropping in dogs (amendment to ban cosmetic surgery in animal tissue in Cruelty to Animals (Animal Protection) Law in December 2000;

9.5 Germany signed the ECPPA in 1988, ratified in 1991 and the date of entry into force was 1st May 1992; a reservation on dog tail docking in hunting breeds was given, but exempted puppies must be the offspring of parents that were specifically used as hunting dogs, not just hunting breeds;

9.6 Sweden signed the ECPPA in 1989, ratified also in 1989 and brought it into force in 1992. After a prohibition on docking on 1 January 1989 there was an apparent increase in tail injuries reported among 'working dogs '. A survey of 53 litters of German shorthaired pointers used mainly for hunting (shooting) was conducted during 1990 –1991. Injuries increased to 51% of the group = 92 individuals = 1 in 3 dogs with serious tail injury (Council for Docked Breeds).

9.7 English pointers are not docked. Nevertheless, it would be unsound to attempt to extrapolate the Swedish data derived from German shorthaired pointers and infer that similar injuries would be encountered in using English pointers, or indeed, any other breed of pointer or working dogs, in the field in the UK.

9.8 Norway banned tail docking in dogs in 1987.

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ANIMAL WELFARE VETERINARY TEAM

5TH AUGUST 2002

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference:	**#5**
Citation Title:	***Behavioural observations of puppies undergoing tail docking***
Citation Author (s):	**Noonan, G; Rand J.; Blackshaw J.**
Publication:	***Applied Animal Behavior Science***
Year Published:	**1996; 4: 335-342**
Country:	**UNITED KINGDOM**
Type Of Article:	**Data-Driven Study NO**
	Literature Review YES
	Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

The summary below is courtesy of the New Zealand Council of Docked Breeds:

Australian TV programmes prepared by the RSPCA & the AVA & purportedly demonstrating how the pups scream in response to the pain of cutting off the tail, failed to do this; ie., neither pup exhibited any visible response & one made a barely audible sound whereas the other made no sound.)

The above is subjective & we must therefore seek sound scientific evidence on which to base an objective verdict. Noonan et al (1996) used the number of cries/shrieks as an index of pain & concluded that the docking of pups' tails is painful. However, that study is scientifically flawed because the investigators failed to include parallel control animals, ie., they should have subjected puppies to the identical procedure employed when tails were docked, but not dock tails in this control group while still observing their responses.

BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATIONS OF PUPPIES UNDERGOING TAIL DOCKING

The behaviour of 50 puppies of traditionally docked breeds was recorded during and after the procedure of tail docking at the University of Queensland Companion Animal Veterinary Hospital. The behaviours were recorded at the time of the procedure andthen in 5 second intervals for the first minute followed by 10 second intervals until the pup settled to sleep. All puppies vocalised intensely ("shrieking") at the time of amputation of the tail, averaging 24 shrieks (range of 5 to 33). The average number of minor vocalisations ("whimpers") made during docking was 18 (range of 2 to 46). There were no shrieks recorded during the recovery period. The average number of whimpers made during the first 30 s after completion of the amputation was3 (range of 0 to 18). There was a significant (p less than or equal to 0.001) reduction in the number of shrieks and whimpers emitted by pups in the 30 second period following docking. On average, the pups ceased vocalising 138 s after docking (range of 5 to 840 s). Significant correlation coefficients were found between the time taken to stop vocalising and the number of whimpers during docking (r = 0.409) and total vocalisations during docking (r = 0.393). That is, the more vocalisations madeduring docking, the longer the pup took to settle in the recovery period. The pups varied in the time taken to settle to sleep with a mean settling time of 3 min (range of 35 a to 14 min). Although it is difficult to objectively quantify the stressexperienced by puppies undergoing tail docking, observations recorded during this study suggest that the animals do experience pain. The pain appears to be short-lived (with all puppies quiescent by a maximum of 15 min). Further research into the issue of pain in pups undergoing tail docking is recommended to determine whether the procedure should continue.

: Noonan GJ Rand JS Blackshaw JK Priest J

: Applied Animal Behaviour Science

,(): 1996 Vol.49(No.4)

: :

Dog welfare Tail docking Vocalisation Ontogeny;Pain Stress Dogs

: eng

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AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference:	**#6**
Citation Title:	***Association in bitches between breed, size neutering and docking and acquired urinary incontinence due to the incompetence of the urethral sphincter mechanism***
Citation Author (s):	**Thrushfield P; Holt M.**
Publication:	***Veterinary Record***
Year Published:	**1993; 4: 335-342**
Country:	**UNITED KINGDOM**
Type Of Article:	**Data-Driven Study NO**
	Literature Review YES
	Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Refers to a 1996 article in the *United Kingdom Veterinary Record* entitled, "*Association in bitches between breed, size, neutering and docking, and acquired urinary incontinence due to incompetence of the urethral sphincter mechanism".* The risk of incontinence was extremely low, and no evidence has been produced in the U.S.

The Veterinary Record, Vol 133, Issue 8, 177-180

Papers & Articles

Association in bitches between breed, size, neutering and docking, and acquired urinary incontinence due to incompetence of the urethral sphincter mechanism

PE Holt and MV Thrusfield

Department of Veterinary Surgery, University of Bristol, Langford.

The association in bitches between breed, size, neutering and docking, and acquired incompetence of the urethral sphincter mechanism was investigated. Observational studies were conducted on referred and first-opinion cases of hormonal urinary incontinence and on referred, confirmed cases of incompetence of the urethral sphincter mechanism. Large and giant breeds were at high risk, whereas small breeds were at low risk. Specific breeds at high risk were the old english sheep-dog, rottweiler, dobermann pinscher, weimaraner and Irish setter. The labrador retriever had a relatively low risk. There was also a positive association between docking and neutering, and the two conditions.

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference: #7
Citation Title: *Anatomical aspects of perineal hernia in the dog*
Citation Author (s): Canfield R.
Publication: *Author's PhD Doctoral Thesis – University of Sydney*
Year Published: 1986
Country: AUSTRALIA
Type Of Article: Data-Driven Study NO
Literature Review YES
Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Refers to an unproven doctoral thesis by a student at the University of Sydney, which is not available on the web.

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference: #8
Citation Title: *Association between tail injuries and docking in dogs*
Citation Author (s): Darke PGG, Thrusfield MV, Aitken CGG.
Publication: *Veterinary Record*
Year Published: 1985
Country: UNITED KINGDOM
Type Of Article: Data-Driven Study NO
Literature Review YES
Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Refers to a 1985 article in the ***United Kingdom*** *Veterinary Record* by three activists. The article was entitled, "*Association between tail injuries and docking in dogs*", which has been disputed by others – see the attached – and is also not data-driven evidence.

Association between tail injuries and docking in dogs

P. G. G. Darke, M. V. Thrusfield, C. G. G. Aitken

Veterinary Record (1985) 116, 409

A CURRENT controversy exists over the value of docking the tails of dogs. Protagonists of the procedure suggest that it reduces the risk of tail injuries (Smith 1984) and that breeders' sales may be affected by not docking (Fardell 1984). Antagonists argue that docking is a barbaric practice which cannot be justified on prophylactic grounds (Edwards 1984). Few quantitative data are available to support either of these opposing opinions. A study was therefore undertaken to investigate whether docking is associated with a reduced occurrence of damage to tails.

The small animal practice teaching unit at the University of Edinburgh maintains a computerised data base of clinical case record summaries (Thrusfield and Hinxman 1981, Thrusfield 1983). This data base, which is updated daily, holds records dating back to 1965.

The numbers of docked and undocked dogs with and without tail injuries were extracted from the data base. Dogs were defined as being either docked or undocked according to normal docking practice relating to their breed. For example, all boxers were assumed to be docked and all whippets to be undocked. Tail 'injuries' included fractures, lacerations and contusions, dermatoses, self-trauma and neoplasia. A two-way classification of these figures is given in Table 1.

P.G.G. Darke, Small Animal Practice Teaching Unit, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Summerhall, Edinburgh EH9 1QH
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TABLE 1: Presence and absence of tail injuries in docked and undocked dogs

	Tail injuries present	Tail injuries absent	Totals
Undocked	39	9474	9513
Docked	8	2608	2616
Totals	47	12082	12129

Data from Edinburgh University small animal practice teaching unit; most records relate to the period January 1977 to October 1984

The strength of association between the presence of tail injuries and an undocked tail was measured using the odds ratio. An odds ratio significantly greater than one implies a positive association between tail injuries and an undocked tail; the larger the value, the stronger the association. The odds ratio was calculated to be 1·28, with an associated 95 per cent confidence interval of (0·61, 2·69) using the 'logit' method (Plackett 1981). This interval contains 1. Thus, there is insufficient evidence, at the 5 per cent level of statistical significance, to suggest that there is a positive association between tail injuries and an undocked tail.

The calculations do not adjust for confounding by age. If some breeds are represented only by young animals then the likelihood of tail injury (except broken tails in young puppies) is less than the likelihood of tail injury in breeds that are represented by a wide spectrum of age. There are, however, no major discrepancies in the age distribution of the various breeds in the data base.

Misclassification bias may have occurred. Some dogs, classified as docked according to their breed, may not have been docked. Selection bias might also have occurred if the teaching unit's dog population was not representative of either other practices or the total dog population. The unit has a proportion of referred cases, but it is unlikely that there is a confounding relationship between tail injuries and referred problems.

Since the odds ratio is not significantly greater than one, tail docking cannot be recommended as a prophylactic procedure against tail injuries in any dog population similar to the predominantly urban one from which the teaching unit draws its cases.

Acknowledgements. — The case records used in this study were collected by clinicians at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies; their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

References

EDWARDS, A.M. (1984) *Veterinary Record* 114, 528
FARDELL, M.D. (1984) *Veterinary Record* 115, 111
PLACKETT, R.L. (1981) The Analysis of Categorical Data, 2nd edn. London: Charles Griffin & Co p47
SMITH, W.J. (1984) *Veterinary Record* 115, 135
THRUSFIELD, M.V. (1983) Proceedings of the third international symposium on veterinary epidemiology and economics, Arlington, Virginia, 6-10 September, 1982. Edwardsville Kansas, Veterinary Medical Publishing Co. p111
THRUSFIELD, M.V. & HINXMAN, A.I. (1981) *Journal of Small Animal Practice* 22, 669

Critique of the publication: Darke, Thrusfield & Aitken (1985), Association between tail injuries and docking in dogs, *Veterinary Record*, **116**: 409.

Protagonists of docking maintain that it reduces the risk of tail injuries, while antagonists argue that it is such a barbaric procedure that it cannot be justified on prophylactic grounds. In view of the fact that no quantitative data were available to support either claim, Darke *et al* said they would "investigate whether docking is associated with a reduced occurrence of damage to tails". They did this by examining the data base of clinical case record of the small animal practice teaching unit at the Univ. of Edinburgh. The study may be criticized from three aspects :

1. Strictly speaking, traditionally docked breeds are not directly comparable to non-docked breeds in terms of tail injury, because the principal original purpose of docking was to remove the tail from those breeds which were originally found to be susceptible to tail injury. Therefore, the truly valid test of the prophylactic value of docking is to compare docked with undocked individuals within traditionally docked breeds. For example, it is pointless to compare tail injuries in German Shorthaired Pointers with English Pointers because the much greater prevalence of injuries in the GSP (when originally being developed) is precisely the reason it began to be docked. There were & still are few injuries in the EP & therefore it does not require & has not ever required docking to protect it. This difference is presumably due to the lower tail-set in the EP.

Consequently, the Ebinburgh data actually indicate a 15-times higher rate of tail injury in traditionally docked than in non-docked breeds. That is, the most valid comparison based on the data presented by Darke *et al* is to take the commonly assumed estimate that 5% of the pups of traditionally docked breeds are not docked, ie., 5% of 2616 = 131. Eight injuries of 131 = 6% of these with tail injuries. The traditionally non-docked group had 39 of 9513 with injuries, = 0.4%, a 15-fold difference. In fact, the "0.4%" is the value employed by the Australian Veterinary Association supposedly to illustrate how few tail injuries there are & therefore how unnecessary docking is. What the AVA failed to point out is the fact that their data came from breeds which were not docked *because they never needed to be docked*.

2. **The Edinburgh data did not specify whether or not each individual dog had been docked** & therefore the Darke *et al* assumed there had been normal docking practice according to breed, ie., all Boxers were assumed to have been docked whereas all Whippets were assumed to not be docked.

What bias could any misclassification cause & will it influence conclusions based on the data ? The *sole* effect which any misclassification can have had on the "docked" data, is a negative one, ie., a dog with tail injury which they assumed to have been docked (because of its breed) might not have been docked, leading to *an over-estimate of the number of injuries in docked dogs and the conclusion that docking is not beneficial in terms of avoiding injury.* Likewise, or conversely, the sole effect which any misclassification can have had on the "non-docked" data, is a positive one ie., a dog which had been docked (despite being of a non-docked breed) did not have a tail which could be injured, leading to an under-estimate of the number of injuries in non-docked dogs and the conclusion that a full length tail is not more likely to be injured.

Thus, misclassifications will have narrowed the difference between injuries to docked & non-docked dogs & caused a bias towards the conclusion that docking is not an effective prophylactic measure. This begs the question: " **Because, for example, a dog cannot develop testicular cancer if it has been castrated earlier in life, how can a dog's tail be injured if it has been docked ?**" From this perspective, there is absolutely no need for such a study as that by Darke *et al.*

3. Notwithstanding the above insurmountable problems, it is finally noteworthy that although Darke et al found the "**odds ratio**" which they employed as a test of the strength of association between tail injuries & the presence of a full tail, to be 1.28, they concluded there was not a positive association between tail injuries & an undocked tail.

PLEASE NOTE : A hitherto unmentioned highly **significant outcome from the data** is the much greater number (a factor of x3.6) of non-docked dogs which presented for treatment of any kind. If, as maintained by antagonists of docking, there are untoward side effects of docking (eg., urinary incontinence, attacks by non-docked dogs because of communication difficulties, etc), a relatively greater number of visits to the vet by docked breeds must be expected. That is, from Jan. 1977 to Oct. 1984, the Small Animal Practice Teaching Unit at the Univ. of Edinburgh recorded 12,129 consultations, of which 9513 were dogs of traditionally non-docked & 2616 traditionally docked breeds. Because around one-third of all breeds are docked, if there was no bias towards either non-docked or docked breeds, theoretical subdivision of the total would yield values of 8005 & 4003 (respectively). These data clearly indicate a distinct bias towards bad health in non-docked breeds & good health in docked breeds, however, we would not suggest that this is a reality , but that the bias is due to some other factor such as cross-breeds in the non-docked group. What we are undeniably left with, is the fact that the numbers of visits to the veterinarian shows that there is absolutely no bias towards there being more health problems in traditionally docked than in non-docked breeds.

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I, Dr JRS. Hales of 15 Taylors Rd., Dural, NSW 2158, Australia, hereby give my approval for my above writings to be published. 'phone + 61 2 9653 9897, email Giantpaws@Bigfoot.com

"Association between tail injuries and docking in dogs": P.G.G. Darke, M.V. Thrusfield, C.G.G Aitken. *Veterinary Record (1985) 116 409.*

This study, carried out by the Edinburgh Veterinary School, came to the conclusion that:

"… tail docking cannot be recommended as a prophylactic measure against tail injuries in any dog population similar to the predominantly urban one from which the teaching unit draws it cases."

With understandable relish, the Anti-Docking lobby has seized on this "study" as accepted scientific evidence in support of its campaign to ban all tail docking and particularly "prophylactic" docking.

Design / execution of the "study":

(a) Clinical information was extracted from the clinic database for the period January 1977 to October 1984.
(b) Docked and undocked dogs were defined according to normal docking practice relating to their breed, e.g. all boxers were assumed to be docked and all whippets were assumed to be undocked.
(c) Tail injuries included fractures, lacerations, contusions, dermatoses, self-trauma and neoplasia.
(d) The incidence of tail injuries in both docked and undocked dogs was tabulated thus:

	Tail injuries present	Tail injuries absent	Total dogs
Undocked……	39	9474	9513
Docked ……...	8	2608	2616
Totals ……..	47	12082	12129

On these figures, there was an incidence of 0.4% tail injuries in undocked dogs &
there was an incidence of 0.31% tail injuries in docked breeds.

The "study" then calculated the ratio of % tail injuries in undocked dogs against the % tail injuries in docked dogs (0.4 / 0.31), approximating to an **"odds ratio" of 1.28**, allowing for a statistical margin of error for the sample size.

The "study" proposed that, if the "odds ratio" was significantly greater than one, it would imply that there was a positive association, (i.e. a benefit) between tail injuries and an undocked tail.

Conclusion of the "study":

As the "odds ratio" was only 1.28, ***"… tail docking cannot be recommended as a prophylactic procedure against tail injuries***…" The "study" admitted that the study sample may have had inherent weaknesses/ bias, but concluded that such aberrations would have had little overall impact on the final conclusions.

This "study" may impress those of an unscientific mind or the anti-docking lobby, but it is deeply flawed as a bona fide scientific study.

In any scientific study that researches the impact of a particular variable, it is **critical and accepted practice** to compare two groups of test subjects. These groups cannot differ, <u>except by the variable under test</u>. Thus, as far as examining tail injuries in docked v undocked dogs, all other parameters in the test groups must be standardised thus:

(a) Same breed
(b) Same blood lines
(c) Same sex
(d) Same environmental conditions – ambient temperature, food and water intake, same exercise programme etc

- to name but a few. In any two groups of test subjects, it is impossible to have exactly the same experimental conditions, even if one group was an exact clone of the other. For that reason, statistical analysis is used to produce final results that allow for inevitable variation between the two groups.

In this "study", the only variable <u>should</u> have been docked or undocked **within a traditionally docked breed**. Every other variable should have been the same or as close as possible to it. If follows that a proper study <u>should</u> have measured the incidence of tail injury in two groups of, say 3,000 Boxers each, one group docked and one group undocked. Apart from that variable, the respective groups should have been as similar as possible and statistical tools applied to minimise genetic / sex/ age / environmental etc variables.

In fact, this "study" actually compared the incidence of tail injury in two groups of dogs, which by its own test criteria, were simply divided between those that belonged to normally undocked breeds, (eg whippet) and those that belonged to normally docked breeds, (eg boxer). **This group division represented a critical flaw in the design of the "study" because traditionally docked and undocked breeds have quite different tail anatomies and "wag mechanics".**

Traditionally undocked breeds, (eg whippet), have relatively light and/or short tails and thus low "wag momentum/ exposure" at the tail tip. They represent a low natural risk for tail damage - hence traditionally undocked.

Traditionally docked breeds, (eg boxer), have relatively long and/or heavy tails and thus high "wag momentum/exposure" at the tail tip. They represent a high natural risk of tail damage – hence traditionally docked.

It follows that the "study" was simply not comparing like with like when choosing two groups purely on whether they were traditionally docked or undocked breeds.

The "study" could **not** compare the incidence of traditional, undocked tail damage against that of undocked versions of traditionally docked breeds simply because **virtually none of the latter existed !!**

Secondly, the "study" was inherently flawed because, by its own admission, the results were based on a "predominantly urban population" sample. Common sense would confirm that many of the traditionally docked working breeds are hunting dogs, which face much more risk of tail damage going through rough cover than would the urban equivalent walking along Princes Street in Edinburgh! The "study", therefore, was simply wrong to extrapolate urban incidence of tail injury into a working, countryside environment.

I am both shocked and disappointed at this "study" was so poorly planned and executed. Given these gross shortcomings, it was always inevitable that any results would be both unscientific and grossly misleading.

Despite being widely quoted and touted by the anti-docking lobby, the "study" is of no scientific value whatsoever in the docking debate.

Signed,

Joseph Holmes MRCVS

16/01/2006.

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference: **#9**
Citation Title: ***Tail docking in dogs: a sample of attitudes in veterinarians and dog breeders in Queensland***
Citation Author (s): **Noonan GJ, Rand JS, Blackshaw JK, et al.**
Publication: **Australian *Veterinary Journal***
Year Published: **1996; 73: 86-88**
Country: **AUSTRALIA**
Type Of Article: **Data-Driven Study NO**
Literature Review NO
Author's Opinion NO

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Refers to a 1996 article in the ***Australian*** *Veterinary Journal* by **three anti-docking activist vets**, seeking to support the enactment of anti-docking legislation. The article was entitled, "*Tail docking in dogs: a sample of attitudes of veterinarians and dog breeders in* ***Queensland***. No mention as to how the vets surveyed were selected.

1: Aust Vet J. 1996 Mar;73(3):86-8. Links

Tail docking in dogs: a sample of attitudes of veterinarians and dog breeders in Queensland.

Noonan GJ, **Rand JS**, **Blackshaw JK**, **Priest J**.

Department of Companion Animal Medicine and Surgery, School of Veterinary Science, University of Queensland.

One hundred veterinarians and 100 breeders of traditionally docked dogs from Queensland were surveyed by telephone to determine their attitudes towards tail docking. Eighty-four percent of the breeders surveyed were in favour of docking, whereas 83% of veterinarians were opposed to the practice. Most pups were docked between 1 and 3 days of age. All veterinarians surgically amputated the tail, whereas 16% of breeders applied rubber bands to the tail. Seventy-six percent of the veterinarians, but only 18% of the breeders believed that docking caused significant to severe pain. No veterinarians, but 25% of the dog breeders believed that docking was painless. Although recent changes to the Queensland Canine Control Council's rulings allow dogs with intact tails to be shown in traditionally docked classes, the requirement of breed standard was cited as the major reason for tail docking by both breeders and veterinarians.

PMID: 8660219 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference: #10
Citation Title: *BSAVA Docking Questionnaire*
Citation Author (s): (UK) Council of Docked Breeds
Publication: Organization Website
Year Published: NA/
Country: UNITED KINGDOM
Type Of Article: Data-Driven Study NO
Literature Review YES
Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

The BSAVA survey was only sent **just 25% of all UK practice vets** and the results were highly disputed by the UK's Council of Docked Breeds as a misrepresentation of the opinions of practicing vets, and as the means to support the anti-cropping/anti-docking movement in the UK.

BSAVA Docking Questionnaire Results

The following questionnaire was sent to 3300 UK members of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association. Up to 10/03/92, 2214 replies were received (67%) at which point the results were collated. In the preamble to the questions, comment on the incidence of tail injury, especially in normally docked breeds was requested.

		Yes	No	% Yes	% No
1	Do you dock the tails of puppies	966	1248	44	56
2	Do you think that docking the tails of breeds at present docked should continue?	216	1998	10	90
3	Do you believe that the non therapeutic docking of tails should be banned?	2044	170	92	8
4	If yes to 3, is your main argument				
i)	welfare	244		12	
ii)	mutilation	285		14	
iii)	i & ii	1343		66	
iv)	other	164		8	
5	Would you agree with a docking ban imposed by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons	1985	256	88	12

The BSAVA survey was only sent to the 3300 UK BSAVA members. The BVA Annual Report 1993, states that at the time, there were 8141 Veterinary Surgeons in General Practice, in Wholetime Appointment within the UK.

The 1998 vets who stated that docking should not continue, were therefore not a majority, **but represented just 25% of all UK practice vets.**

If you take ALL members of the Profession, i.e. those in Government Service, Universities, Research and "Others" you come to a total of 16066 vets, less 2796 Overseas, less 1976 retired, less 1490 in the Republic of Ireland equals 9804. **The 1998 vets now only represents 20% of all UK vets.**

A sobering thought considering the fact that those against tail docking use this survey in an attempt to persuade us that the majority of Veterinary Surgeons support the RCVS aim of banning tail docking completely.

Contact the CDB

to contact us

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference:	**#11**
Citation Title:	***Submission to Government Administration Committee***
Citation Author (s):	**Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**
Publication:	**Submitted for the purposes of supporting legislation to restrict tail docking in New Zealand**
Year Published:	**2005**
Country:	**NEW ZEALAND**
Type Of Article:	**Data-Driven Study NO** **Literature Review NO** **Author's Opinion YES**

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Citation #11 refers to poll (highly contested by the NZ Council of Docked Breeds) **conducted by the vegan activists/animal rights extremists** at the **New Zealand** SPCA NZ SPCA (***Expose Animal Cruelty – Open Your Fridge***) which allegedly showed public support for a ban on tail docking in the 2005 document, "Submission to Government Administration Committee", another effort in to push through a tail docking ban in that country http://rnzspca.org.nz/images/stories/submissions/submission-taildocking_bill.pdf The sample size of the NZ SPCA survey is not mentioned, nor are any other survey details, (age, how/when/where conducted, survey demographics, etc.)

Submission to

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Presented by

ROYAL NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS INCORPORATED

In the matter of

ANIMAL WELFARE (RESTRICTION ON DOCKING OF DOGS' TAILS) BILL

ROYAL NEW ZEALAND SPCA
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25 February 2005

Submission to: **Government Administration Committee**

Re: **Animal Welfare (Restriction on Docking of Dogs' Tails) Bill**

Submission of the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Inc

This submission is made on behalf of the Royal New Zealand SPCA, its district branches, and those members of the public who have made "SPCA postcard" submissions.

The Royal New Zealand SPCA supports the restriction on docking of dogs' tails for other than medical or surgical reasons by veterinarians or veterinary science students for the following reasons.

1. Compliance with the Animal Welfare Act 1999

The Royal New Zealand SPCA believes that cosmetic amputation of dogs' tails is contrary to the intention of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 – that is, to prevent ill-treatment of animals.

(i) "Ill-treat" as defined in the Act (section 2, Interpretation) means "causing the animal to suffer, by any act or omission, pain or distress that in its kind or degree, or in its object, or in the circumstances in which it is inflicted, is unreasonable or unnecessary".

Tail docking is a totally unnecessary mutilation causing pain to the pup and the possibility of immediate to long-term complications such as infection, nerve damage and incontinence.

(ii) The Act, in section 4 (Definition of "physical, health, and behavioural needs"), includes "(c) Opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour".

Full tails, in this context, allow dogs to communicate their feelings to their owners and other dogs, and docked dogs are largely deprived of this mode of expression.

(iii) Section 4 of the Act also specifies "(d) Physical handling in a manner which minimises the likelihood of unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress".

The New Zealand Veterinary Association cites acute pain in association with tail amputations indicated by squealing and struggling of pups, and suggests that indeed a higher level of pain may be experienced by pups than dogs as they possess less pain-blocking mechanisms than adult animals.

2. Alleged Damage to Dogs' Tails

All dog breeds that are currently docked have natural tails similar to other undocked breeds. There is no evidence whatsoever that these dogs would suffer any disadvantage by keeping their tails.

Claims such as tail damage, and health issues due to cleanliness or spinal damage are completely insupportable inasmuch as these breeds would suffer no higher incidence of these injuries than other breeds.

It is worth noting that veterinarians report that cats are far more susceptible to their tails being damaged, yet no one has suggested that it would be a good idea to routinely dock all kittens on the basis that their tails may be damaged later in life.

3. International Legislation and Regulation

Imposing this restriction would be in line with international animal welfare legislation.

Nine countries (including Australia, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland) have banned tail docking of dogs for other than medical or surgical reasons.

The United Kingdom has included a ban on canine tail docking in their Animal Welfare Act which is to be considered this year, as mentioned in the Queen's Speech to their Parliament.

4. Breed Standards

International and New Zealand Kennel Club breed standards now allow for full tails on all breeds previously commonly docked, signalling their support for the demise of this unnecessary practice and recognising the inevitability of legislative intervention.

A minority of breeders will be affected by retiring this practice, and those who are at present cosmetically altering their dogs would, within a few years, be obliged to sell and show undocked dogs to follow what is rapidly becoming the "fashion" within the international breeding community.

This bill will ensure that their dogs will, in the short rather than the long term, no longer have to suffer from this outdated practice.

5. Public Opinion

In a poll conducted by Colmar Brunton in February 2005 (see attached report) on behalf of the Royal New Zealand SPCA, the majority of New Zealanders surveyed opposed tail docking. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the SPCA's position that tail docking of dogs should be banned, **68%** said they agreed, 18% said they disagreed and 14% had no opinion.

The survey also asked whether respondents or their families currently owned or cared for a dog – 30% replied yes, 70% no. The results for each category were then as follows:

Dog owners: **65%** agreed with the SPCA's position that tail docking of dogs should be banned, 29% said they disagreed and 6% had no opinion.

Non-dog owners: **70%** agreed with the SPCA's position that tail docking of dogs should be banned, 13% said they disagreed and 17% had no opinion.

The poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.4%.

It is clear from the poll results that, across both dog owners and non-dog owners, there is strong support for the SPCA's position that tail docking of dogs should be banned.

6. In Summary

The Royal New Zealand SPCA supports this bill as a timely amendment to the Animal Welfare Act 1999 in safeguarding the welfare and well-being of dogs that are commonly cosmetically mutilated by dog breeders.

Breeders say they need to dock the tails of particular breeds because it is traditional to dock them and the dogs may damage the tails when they are older. They say that removing part of the tail does not hurt the puppy, and that it should be the breeder's choice as to whether they do it.

The Royal New Zealand SPCA believes the docking of dogs' tails is unnecessary. Dogs' tails are very rarely damaged, and removing part of the tail is painful and can lead to infection in the short term and health problems for the dog later in life. We believe dogs need their tails to communicate and that there is no good reason for them to be docked.

We wish to speak to our submission.

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Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Inc
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Chief Executive
Auckland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Inc
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Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Inc

The Royal New Zealand SPCA is a voluntary organisation representing and upholding the welfare of animals in New Zealand. Through its district branches it also provides help to animals and owners of animals through animal inspectors, shelters and clinics.

The SPCA's mission is to advance the welfare of all animals in New Zealand by:

- preventing cruelty to animals
- alleviating suffering of animals
- promoting our policies through education and advocacy.

The National Office:

- represents the Society on government committees
- promotes and handles all approaches to government for new and amended legislation relating to animal welfare
- liaises with overseas and international welfare groups
- handles major animal welfare prosecutions that have national implications
- coordinates the activities of the 50 district branches
- coordinates inspector training throughout the country and warrants inspectors
- undertakes national educational and promotional programmes
- organises and coordinates national fund-raising promotions.

District branches:

- investigate and deal with complaints of cruelty and neglect
- uphold the laws relating to the treatment of animals and take prosecutions where necessary
- give sanctuary to animals in distress
- rehome suitable animals where possible
- ensure that animals that cannot be kept alive for whatever reason are humanely euthanased
- assist with public education
- promote responsible pet ownership.

Consultation

In preparing this submission we have consulted with:
Australian RSPCA
UK RSPCA
NZ Veterinary Association
Colmar Brunton Research Ltd

Yours sincerely

Robyn McDonald
National Chief Executive

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference: #12
Citation Title: *Tail docking in dogs: can attitude change be achieved?*
Citation Author (s): Bennett PC, Perini E.
Publication: *Australian Veterinary Journal*
Year Published: 2003; 81:277- 82
Country: NEW ZEALAND
Type Of Article: Data-Driven Study NO
Literature Review NO
Author's Opinion YES

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Refers to a 2003 article by **Australian** anti-docking supporters Bennett and Perini in the ***Australian Veterinary Journal*** entitled, "*Tail docking in dogs: can attitude change be achieved?"* Neither Patricia Bennett nor E. Perini are vets, but psychologists, whose evaluation of literature "*suggests that the practice has little to recommend it and that, in the absence of reasonable case-by-case justification, it may constitute an unacceptable abuse of a sentient species*".

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1: Aust Vet J. 2003 May;81(5):277-82.

Related Articles, Links

Tail docking in dogs: can attitude change be achieved?

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The debate about tail docking in domestic dogs continues to rage in many developed countries and attitudes expressed by different community groups remain diametrically opposed. Veterinary associations and welfare organisations typically want the practice banned, while many breeders and pure-bred dog associations just as vigorously oppose the introduction of anti-docking legislation. In recent years, much data have been accumulated concerning the welfare implications of tail docking. A recent evaluation of this literature suggests that the practice has little to recommend it and that, in the absence of reasonable case-by-case justification, it may constitute an unacceptable abuse of a sentient species. Given this situation, it is difficult to understand why many canine interest groups, presumably representing those people who care most about the welfare of companion dogs, should continue to hold such strong attitudes in favour of tail docking. In this review we attempt to explain why different community groups might espouse strong but opposing attitudes, despite having access to the same information. We argue that the theory of cognitive dissonance, popular among social psychologists, may provide a useful framework within which to understand, and attempt to alter, attitudes that persist even though they appear contrary to available empirical evidence.

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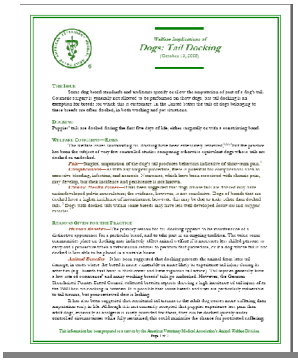

AUDIT OF AVMA POSITION DOCUMENT & CITATION

AVMA Document: Welfare Implications Of Dogs: Tail Docking
DATE: October 13, 2008
AUTHOR: AVMA Animal Welfare Committee

Citation Reference: #13
Citation Title: *UK Tail Docking Survey*
Citation Author (s): (UK) Council of Docked Breeds
Publication: Organization Website
Year Published: NA/
Country: UNITED KINGDOM
Type Of Article: Data-Driven Study YES
Literature Review NO
Author's Opinion NO

SUMMARY OF AVMA CITATION:

Poll conducted by ORB , a member of the British Polling Council on behalf on the Council of Docked Breeds in the UK to survey public opinion regarding tail docking. Two thirds of the respondents supported tail docking.

Why dock tails
What is tail docking and dewclaw removal
The case for docking
Video of pups being docked
Frequently Asked Questions
Pain felt by puppies
Tail damage reports
Swedish tail damage report

Damage evidence
UK Boxer 1
UK Boxer 2
UK Spaniel
UK GSP
Swedish Boxer
Undocked breed
Undocked mongrel

The UK CDB
A potted history
Animal Welfare Bill campaign
Reform of VSA campaign
List of traditionally Docked Breeds
Political Advertisements

What UK vets say
Many UK vets want to dock
One docking vet disciplined
RCVS admit defeat
Red herrings!
RCVS guidelines
RCVS hypocrisy
RCVS working party
Vet questionnaire
BSAVA vet questionnaire
Vet advice to dock Boxers

Docking worldwide
America
Australia
Canada
Europe
New Zealand

Links
Pictures of long tailed Scandinavian Boxers
Major docked breed sites
Other related canine sites
Opponents of docking sites
Site opposing European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals

Archives
view older material

Public vote overwhelmingly supports tail docking

The Countryside Alliance has published an independent poll which clearly shows that the majority of the general public do not want a ban on tail docking.

The vote is split fairly evenly with close on one third wanting the status quo to remain, another third supporting the option for just working dogs and only 36% want a complete ban.

Considering that the public have been bombarded with hysterical misinformation from the RSPCA, two thirds of the public supporting the continuation of tail docking is a remarkable result in its favour.

We hope that our politicians take note, that these results reflect the wishes of their constituents and that with over 1 million docked dogs in the UK, tail docking is not a matter affecting just a few of them. We trust that MP's carefully consider how they vote on March 8th, and base their vote on fact not hearsay.

The poll, carried out by ORB* for the Countryside Alliance, shows that just 39% of people think that the docking of working dogs should be banned. The survey asked:

Typically a vet may dock (shorten) a dog's tail when the dog is young for two reasons – one is for cosmetic reasons (i.e. to enter the dog into a competition), the other is for working dogs (such as police dogs and working spaniels) to prevent serious tail injuries to them. Which of the following would you prefer?

Banning this procedure for all types of dogs 36%

Banning this procedure for working dogs 3%

Total – banning for working dogs 39%

Banning this procedure for cosmetic reasons 34%

None of these – this procedure should be allowed to continue 27%

**ORB interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,003 adults aged 18+ throughout England , Scotland and Wales between 10 th – 12 th February 2006. ORB is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its Code of Conduct.*

Contact the CDB

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