



Educational materials on alternatives to surgical castration of piglets

*Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed
14/15 December 2020*

Kirsten Vornhagen
Animal Welfare, G5
Directorate for Health and Food Safety



Background

- *Pig castration is legal but remains a welfare issue*
- *Pilot project in the 2017 Budget:*
 - “Establishment of a harmonised internal market for pigmeat obtained from pigs that have not been surgically castrated”



Specific objectives

- *For entire pigs (uncastrated):*
 - **How to reduce boar taint at farm level**
 - **How to detect boar taint at slaughterhouse**
 - **How to deal with meat with detectable boar taint**
 - **How to increase market value of meat from uncastrated pigs**



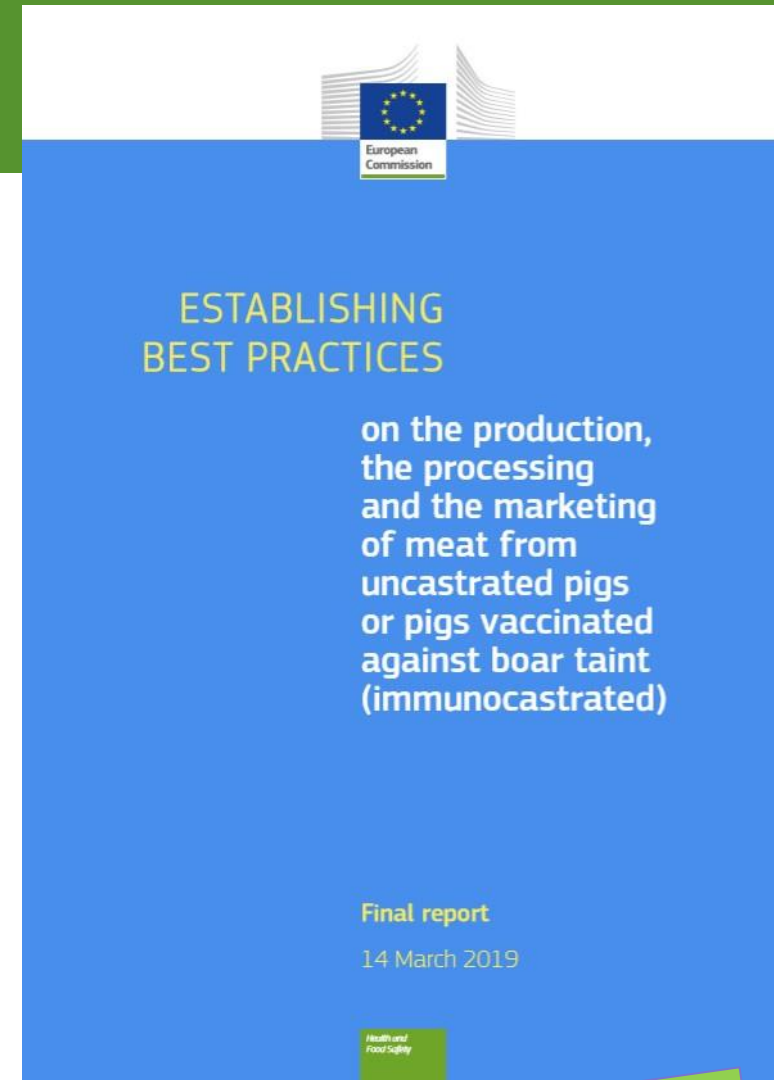
Specific objectives (2)

- *For vaccinated pigs (immunocastrated):*
 - **How to vaccinate pigs**
 - **How to ensure at farm level that vaccinated pigs will not have boar taint**
 - **How to trust farmers that vaccinated pigs will not have boar taint**
 - **How to increase acceptance of meat from vaccinated pigs**

Study

“Establishing best practices on the production, the processing and the marketing of meat from uncastrated pigs or pigs vaccinated against boar taint (immunocastrated)”

- Final report 14 March 2019 -



https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/practice/farm/pigs/castration_alternatives_en

Results

- ***Transition to entire males or vaccination depends on the whole supply chain***
- ***Farmers' costs vs others' costs (slaughterhouses, food processors, retailers)***
- ***Transition is ultimately based on market demand***
- ***Retailers and food services are essential in the process***



Background (2)

Phase 2 - from August 2019 to December 2020 - :

Dissemination of the best practices established in phase 1

- Factsheets

- Video

Educational materials (1)

- **12 Factsheets**

**General (1) - Farmers (4) – Slaughterhouses (3)
– Food Processors (1) - Retailers & Food Service
Operators (3)**

- **24 languages**

- 22 EU + RU +ZH -

FACTSHEETS

01 Ending surgical castration

FARMERS

2A Reducing boar taint risk
in entire males

2B Vaccinating pigs against
boar taint

2C Preventing detectable boar
taint in immunocastrated pigs

2D Success stories

SLAUGHTERHOUSES

3A Detecting boar taint
in uncastrated pigs

3B Ensuring absence of boar taint

3C Success stories

FOOD PROCESSORS

04 Managing boar taint in meat

RETAILERS & FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

5A Increasing the market value
of meat from uncastrated pigs

5B Increasing consumer acceptance
and raising awareness of meat
from immunocastrated pigs

5C Success stories

Educational materials (2)

- **1 Video addressing the whole production chain**
EN plus 23 with subtitles (total 22 EU+RU+ZH)
- **3 standalone videos by stakeholder**
EN only for social media
- **Info graphics, Info sheets, Posters**
- **USB sticks for dissemination**



Ending surgical castration

01 | FOR FARMERS, SLAUGHTERHOUSES, FOOD PROCESSORS, RETAILERS AND FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

ADVANTAGES

WELFARE

- No pain, low stress
- Reduced sexual and aggressive behaviour for immunocastrated pigs
- No surgery, no infection risk leads to better health
- Faster growth for immunocastrated pigs

FEED EFFICIENCY

- Better feed conversion ratio by entire males
- Adjustments in feed composition can be introduced quickly

ENVIRONMENT

- Less feed resources needed and less manure produced

PERCEPTION & ACCEPTANCE

- More humane, less invasive practices reduce animal welfare concerns
- Reduce labour-intensive practices
- In general, only two vaccinations needed for immunocastration

QUALITY

- Early vaccination maximises intramuscular fat and back fat deposition that are valued by certain markets
- Meat from immunocastrated pigs can be safely eaten at any time after vaccination

PRODUCTION

- Positive cost-benefit-ratio: better performance of animals offsets cost of immunocastration

ALTERNATIVES

Raise entire male pigs



Vaccinate against boar taint

Animal Welfare



European Commission

FS 01: General

BEST PRACTICES & TECHNIQUES

FARMERS



- using management practices to reduce boar taint
- using vaccination in various types of pigs
- ensuring that immunocastrated pigs and entire males don't present detectable boar taint

FOOD PROCESSORS



- quantifying and managing meat with detectable boar taint

SLAUGHTERHOUSES



- detecting boar taint, quantifying and managing carcasses that are tested positive for boar taint
- ensuring that immunocastrated pigs don't contain detectable boar taint

RETAILERS & FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS



- increasing market value and acceptance of meat from immunocastrated pigs and preventing meat with detectable boar taint from reaching consumers

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2D Success stories

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FOOD PROCESSORS

- 04 Managing boar taint in meat

RETAILERS & FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

- 5A Increasing the market value of meat from uncastrated pigs
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- 5C Success stories

SUCCESS STORIES

Successful market-based solutions for ending surgical castration were established by large pork food supply chains in major pork producing countries in the EU (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain) in 2018.

For more information on success stories about transitions to entire males or immunocastrated pigs, see factsheets 2D, 3C, 5C



www.bil.jy/zvytvti

For more information, see final report

Establishing best practices on the production, the processing and the marketing of meat from uncastrated pigs or pigs vaccinated against boar taint (immunocastrated)



Ending surgical castration Reducing boar taint risk in entire males

2A | FARMERS



European Commission

FS 2A: Farmers

TECHNIQUES & BEST PRACTICES FOR FARMERS



FLOORING & HOUSING

- Keep flooring and bedding clean and dry
- Ensure pigs have enough space to lie down, eat and defecate
- Separate boars from gilts and sows
- Implement wean-to-finish grouping of pigs of the same age
- House pigs in small groups of 30 or less
- Use semi-open walls to facilitate contact between pigs
- Maintain suitable temperatures, ventilation and day-night rhythm
- Provide environmental enrichment to keep pigs occupied in non-harmful behaviour

BREEDING

- Choose specific breeds or selective breeding methods to reduce boar taint risk from the outset

REDUCED COMPETITION

- Feed boars on demand

FEED COMPOSITION

- Use feed ingredients rich in inulin*
- Feed boars a diet with adjusted amino acids
- Use commercial feed designed to reduce boar taint a few weeks before slaughter
- Switch to a low-protein, grain-based diet four days before slaughter

SCHEDULED SLAUGHTER

- Monitor age using markers
- Choose slaughter age rather than weight
- Exchange information with slaughterhouses about boar taint level and appropriate slaughter age

These methods have been successfully tested and used commercially at different stages and across entire supply chains

Animal Welfare

BENEFITS

- Improved welfare and overall hygiene (e.g. cleaner pen, more additional space)
- Lower costs due to more favourable feed conversion ratios (entire males need approximately 10 % less feed to produce 1 kg of meat)
- Reduction in aggressive behaviour, stress and competition by providing enrichments, keeping pigs together with their siblings and feeding on demand
- Contribute to growth and weight gain
- Lower levels of skatole** and androstenone** (selective breeding, early slaughter, better hygiene, specific feeding)

* natural food fibre ** main substances responsible for boar taint

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- 5C Success stories



SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH FARMERS, SLAUGHTERHOUSES, FOOD PROCESSORS, RETAILERS AND FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

Many of the challenges of switching to entire males or immunocastrated pigs concern relationships and communication between members of the supply chain.

SUCCESS STORIES

Find out how farmers successfully transitioned to entire males or immunocastrated pigs. See Factsheet 2D



www.bit.ly/2vylHVI

For more information, see final report **Establishing best practices on the production, the processing and the marketing of meat from uncastrated pigs or pigs vaccinated against boar taint (immunocastrated)**



Health and Food Safety



TECHNIQUES & BEST PRACTICES FOR RETAILERS & FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

MARKETING TECHNIQUES TO DEAL WITH CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

- Take into account differences in **consumer perception** (not all consumers are aware of boar taint and pig castration issues)
- Market meat from uncastrated pigs with animal welfare messages that are in line with growing interest from European consumers about **welfare-friendly practices**
- Ensure messages mention that **animals are not subjected to the painful practice of castration** and inform about the need to stop castration in pig production
- Emphasise other **benefits of non-castration** (e.g. environmental)
- Request from slaughterhouses and processors **detailed information about their boar taint detection methods** and ask for on-site visits to show effectiveness and robustness of methods

These methods have been successfully tested and used commercially at different stages and across entire supply chains

- Organise in-store trials** in close collaboration with suppliers to gain additional confidence in the feasibility of selling meat from entire males
- Closely monitor** sales and customer complaints during trials to identify any issues and **share information with suppliers**

FOOD LABELLING

- Encourage suppliers to be **certified compliant** with animal welfare schemes
- Products displaying animal welfare labels **can be sold at a higher price** than non-assured meat
- A packaging label that conforms to an animal welfare certification scheme **provides consumers with additional information** about how meat was produced and is an indicator of quality

Animal Welfare



FS 5A: Retailers & Food service operators

Health and Food Safety

BENEFITS

- Compliance with an agreed set of specifications** can prohibit castration, impose specific breeding/feeding techniques, or require certain housing conditions. This is a strong incentive for suppliers to continue selling their meat to retailers
- Build trust** in boar taint detection methods and within the supply chain
- In-store trials reassure store managers that the provision of meat from entire males from a supplier with a robust protocol for boar taint detection **does not mean adverse impact** on consumers and sales
- Labelled products can be sold at a **higher price**
- Robust schemes and auditing systems provide **additional guarantees** to retailers and food service operators

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SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

WITH FARMERS, SLAUGHTERHOUSES, FOOD PROCESSORS, RETAILERS AND FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

Many of the challenges of switching to entire males or immunocastrated pigs concern relationships and communication between members of the supply chain.

SUCCESS STORIES

Find out how retailers and food service operators successfully transitioned to entire males or immunocastrated pigs. See Factsheet 5C.

www.bit.ly/2vjfVTI

For more information, see final report **Establishing best practices on the production, the processing and the marketing of meat from uncastrated pigs or pigs vaccinated against boar taint (immunocastrated)**

Publications Office of the European Union

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Factsheets

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEST PRACTICES AND TECHNIQUES USED BY FARMERS, SLAUGHTERHOUSES, FOOD PROCESSORS, RETAILERS AND FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS IN OUR **12 FACTSHEETS**





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Info graphic and Info sheet

Ending surgical castration

Collaborate with other supply chain actors

Whether you're a farmer, slaughterhouse, food processor, retailer or food service operator, remember to **share your resources and expertise**. You can **overcome** many of the **challenges** of raising entire males or vaccinating pigs against boar taint with **effective communication** and **improved ties between members of the supply chain** in Europe.

Only by **working together** can you make this transition a successful one!



Health and Food Safety

Ending surgical castration

Through knowledge transfer

FOR FARMERS, SLAUGHTERHOUSES, FOOD PROCESSORS, RETAILERS AND FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS



Transitioning away from surgical castration by raising entire males or vaccinating pigs

EXPLORE OUR RESOURCES AND FIND OUT ABOUT:



- advantages of raising entire males and vaccinating against boar taint
- best practices and techniques that have been successfully tested and used commercially at different stages and across entire supply chains
- benefits of using best practices and techniques
- success stories from farmers, slaughterhouses, retailers and food service operators

Download here

LOOKING FOR MORE IN-DEPTH INFORMATION?

- best practices that have been trialled and successfully used in production and across the entire European supply chain for the raising and slaughter of entire males or pigs vaccinated against boar taint, and the processing and marketing of meat from such animals
- economic feasibility of a transition away from surgical castration, the challenge of boar taint detection and consumer acceptance of alternatives to surgical castration

Read more here

WATCH

a farmer, slaughterhouse operator, food processor, and retail and food services representative talk about transitioning away from surgical castration and how they benefitted



Click to play



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Dissemination

- *Physical dissemination (paper prints, USBs)*
e.g. to ntl. + EU org. and MS central comp. authorities
- *Electronic dissemination (e.g. Commission website)*
- *Information*

Where to find the materials?

https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/practice/farm/pigs/castration_alternatives_en



Thank you!



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