



Niedersächsisches Landesamt für
Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit

Implementing EU legislation on tail docking current obstacles and future options

Mutilations

Option 1: Prohibition of tail docking (..)

Option 2: Additional restrictions on tail docking (...) e.g. mandatory anaesthesia and analgesia

→ Both options address primarily the procedure of tail docking – not the purchase of docked pigs

Experiences implementing the German action plan

Main difficulties for Competent Authorities

1. Trade in 30 (8) kg weaners (within or between MS)

- Pig production in many EU MS is highly specialised
- Selling and buying farmer do not necessarily know each other
- Usually sow farms sell to several fattening farms
- No demand for undocked pigs
- Sow farmer is under pressure to tail dock and to declare / justify the need for tail docking on his farm (evidence of injuries, risk assessment, improvement measures) even if he would be able to rear undocked pigs

Experiences implementing the German action plan

Main difficulties for Competent Authorities

1. Trade in 30 (8) kg weaners (within or between MS)

- It is too easy for fattening farms to declare that there is “no problem with tail biting”, that there are “no tail biting risk factors on their farm” and they “would be able to rear pigs with intact tails” but that there are “no pigs with intact tails for sale”
- In many cases CA have no possibility to verify such statements
- A stronger legal base for tail docking risk assessment and improvement measures would not entirely solve this problem

Experiences implementing the German action plan

Main difficulties for Competent Authorities

2. Verification of farmer statements and “*other measures to prevent tail biting*”

- Tail biting is a multifactorial and complex problem
- Verification of on farm risk assessments and improvement measures requires highly specialised knowledge of pig health, management and production
- Most official veterinarians (inspectors) are generalists
- Legal difficulties with regard to the enforcement of “*improvement measures going beyond minimum requirements*”

Option 1: Prohibition of tail docking

- Should include the prohibition of „rearing docked pigs“
- Legal options with regard to a ban on the import of docked pigs from non-EU countries should be explored
- Transitional period needed because a significant part of EU pig farming facilities do not allow for the rearing of pigs with intact tails

Option 2: Additional restrictions on tail docking (...) e.g. mandatory anaesthesia and analgesia

- “An intact curly tail may well be the single most important animal-based welfare indicator” (EFSA) → tail docking with anaesthesia does not solve the problem!
- CA must be able to verify and enforce “additional restrictions” (also in farms that purchase docked pigs)
- Fattening phase must be made accountable in order to create a demand for undocked pigs → “additional restrictions” should primarily address the rearing of docked pigs (not the procedure of tail docking)

Option 3

Legal provision analogous to Art. 3 Directive 2007/43/EC

- New minimum requirement for space allowance: 1,3 m²
 - By way of derogation minimum space allowance may be reduced to 0,8 m² if:
 - a) all pigs are kept undocked
 - b) less than xx% tail lesions are recorded at slaughter
- (example for a 100 kg slaughter pig)

Option 3

Rationale

- An economic incentive for keeping pigs with intact tails would create a demand for undocked pigs
- No more “shifting of responsibility” between sow farm and fattening farm
- Exceptions for farms that do have serious tail biting problems would still be possible (though costly)
- Stocking density is a known risk factor for tail biting
- Stocking density is literally stated in Directive 2008/120/EC (“*taking into account environment and stocking densities*”).
- Stocking density is relatively straightforward to verify for CA