

# WHY THE TAIL-DOCKING OF DOGS SHOULD BE PROHIBITED





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## 1. THE PROCEDURE OF TAIL-DOCKING

Tail-docking involves the amputation of most or part of a dog's tail. The amputation is usually done when puppies are between two and five days old, using scissors or nail-clippers or sometimes with a tight rubber band that cuts off the blood supply to the tail. The amputation is carried out by a veterinarian, although in some instances, docking may be done illegally by dog breeders. Neither anaesthetic nor analgesia is generally used. Between 50 and 60 of the 200 dog breeds eligible for registration by the Kennel Club have customarily been docked<sup>1</sup>.

The tail is an appendage that forms the hindmost part of the dog's backbone and usually consists of between 6 and 23 mobile vertebrae, enclosed in muscle that is served by 4 to 7 paired nerves. The tail muscles (located on the hind part of the dog's back as well as on the tail itself) are attached to the tail vertebrae by tendons. Docking length varies, but short-docked dogs such as Rottweilers may be left with only 1 or 2 tail vertebrae.

Tail-docking therefore involves the cutting through or crushing of skin, muscles, up to 7 pairs of nerves and bone and cartilage connections.



*Rottweiler with tail © John McCann*



*Rottweiler with docked tail © Animal Photography*



*Boxer with tail © Emma Milne*



*Boxer with docked tail © Animal Photography*

## 2. PAIN CAUSED BY TAIL-DOCKING

Pain can be classified as either 'acute' pain, which does not extend beyond the healing period, or chronic or 'pathological' pain, which continues after the wound has apparently healed. After reviewing the scientific literature, the Animal Welfare Veterinary Division of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs concluded in 2002 that 'tail docking definitely causes pain in neonatal puppies'.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, detailed studies of the pain caused by different methods of tail-docking have been carried out on young farmed animals that are subject to routine mutilations such as tail-docking and castration. It is reasonable to conclude that if lambs or other young animals feel pain when tail-docked, then puppies are also likely to do so.



Rottweiler puppy with 'docking ring' on tail © Sara Elliot/RNZSPCA



Problems caused by tail-docking in an adult dog © Sara Elliot/RNZSPCA



Severe injury caused by tail-docking

## 2.1 Comparison with pain in docked farmed animals

Lambs are tail-docked in a similar manner to puppies - by the use of a blade or a rubber ring - again without analgesia. Numerous studies of lambs' behaviour and physiological responses have shown that they suffer considerable pain for up to 3-4 hours after docking, even though sheep are a species likely to avoid showing pain.

A 1997 study at the Royal (Dick) Veterinary School, Edinburgh, published in the *Journal of Animal Science*, concluded that the tail-docking of lambs is one of the 'unequivocal examples of animals in pain'. The lambs exhibit abnormal standing (motionless 'statue standing' with splayed legs), abnormal locomotor activity (restlessness, kicking, rolling, and other 'attempts to escape'), or abnormal lying (for example, lying motionless on the side with extended legs, giving no 'evidence of conscious awareness')<sup>2</sup>. According to studies by New Zealand scientists at Massey University, a knife and a rubber ring produce different types of pain and hence different types of abnormal response, but it was concluded that 'acute distress' lasts over four hours in lambs treated with a knife and up to 90 minutes in lambs treated with a rubber ring<sup>3</sup>.

Tail-docking also causes pain in pigs. The European Commission's Scientific Veterinary Committee has concluded that 'tail docking is likely to be painful when it is carried out and it has been demonstrated that in a proportion of animals it leads to neuroma formation and hence to prolonged pain'<sup>18</sup>

According to a review of the scientific evidence from Monash University, published in the *Australian Veterinary Journal* in 2003, 'there are clearly reasonable grounds for arguing that surgical docking causes some amount of acute pain in [lambs, piglets and calves], as does banding, and that either method is also likely to cause pain in other physiologically similar species, such as the dog.' An Australian survey in 1996 found that 76% of the veterinarians surveyed believed that tail-docking caused significant to severe pain in puppies, with none believing that puppies experienced no pain at all<sup>4</sup>.



Litter of undocked boxer pups © Sara Elliot/RNZSPCA

## 2.2 Puppies' reaction to tail docking

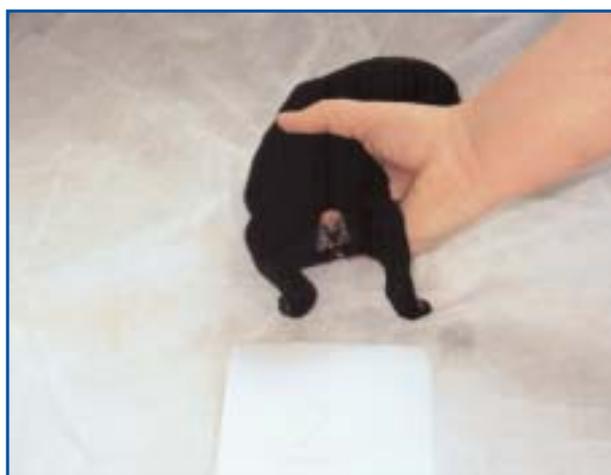
Detailed observations of the behaviour of 50 puppies aged 3-5 days undergoing tail-docking, made by the Department of Companion Animal Medicine and Surgery, University of Queensland, appear to confirm that tail-docking causes pain. The puppies were Dobermans, Rottweilers and Bouviers, whose tails are docked very short and therefore were treated with a suture to prevent uneven healing. The report stated that:

*'All pups appeared distressed by the amputation of the tail. Relatively continuous mild vocalizations during the preparation of the tail turned dramatically to repeated and intense shrieking vocalizations at the moment the tail was docked. The intensity of vocalizations decreased slightly (but was still above the intensity made during preparation of the tail) in the period between amputation and placement of the suture (if appropriate). At the moment of piercing the skin for suture placement, vocalizations again returned to levels comparable with the amputation. Similar intense vocalizations were noticed when pressure was placed on the suture material as the knot was tied. The average number of shrieks made during the amputation of the tail was 24 (range of 5 to 33). The average number of whimpers made during the amputation of the tail was 18 (range of 2 to 46). All pups exhibited some degree of bleeding from the stump following docking<sup>5</sup>.*

When they were returned to their box, the puppies paddled about the box or made uncoordinated limb movements, making occasional whimpers, before they settled to sleep within about three minutes. The puppies were separated from the bitch for the procedure, because she tended to lick the tail stump, resulting in more vocalisation by the pup.



Mother with tail-docked puppy © RSPCA



Tail-docked puppy © RSPCA

It is sometimes suggested that the fact that puppies fall asleep or suckle within a few minutes of tail-docking indicates that they are not in pain. However, it could indicate the reverse. Others have pointed out that there may be evolutionary reasons for puppies sleeping and suckling, as a way of conserving strength at a time of injury. It is also possible that the puppies suckle to reduce the pain, as it is known that the act of suckling stimulates the release of endogenous opioids (endorphins) that produce analgesia.<sup>4</sup>

Docking in itself is a risk; although this appears not to have been scientifically studied, there are anecdotal accounts of puppies dying from shock or blood loss as a result of docking.



The bodies of eleven puppies that died when their tails were docked using a stanley knife © RSPCA

## 2.3 Increased pain in neonatal animals

It has sometimes been suggested that puppies, and neonatal animals in general, feel less pain than older animals because their nervous systems and sensory organs are immature, for example that their nerve cells responsible for pain conduction lack myelination. However, this view appears to lack credibility for a number of reasons.

On the question of myelination of nerve cells, myelination is not necessary to enable conduction of nerve impulses, but only has the effect of speeding conduction. This need have no bearing on the intensity of pain experienced. In other mammalian species, neonatal animals experience pain. Newborn rats respond to painful stimuli immediately after birth, before they are able to see or hear properly. Premature human babies have been found to anticipate a 'heel stick' (to withdraw blood for testing) by changes in their facial expression, heart rate and movements when their heel is raised before the procedure, indicating that they have learned to expect it to be painful.<sup>4</sup>

Some scientists believe that young animals may experience more pain than mature animals. For example, in young animals with tails, the spinal cord extends further down the vertebral column than it does in adults.<sup>4</sup> In addition, because the nervous system of newborns is immature, they do not possess the descending inhibitory fibres from the brain to the spinal cord that modify impulses from a site of injury to the brain. According to evidence to the House of Commons Committee on the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2004, given by an expert on animal pain from the University of Birmingham Centre for Biomedical Ethics, 'very young animals are likely to feel more pain than older animals'<sup>6</sup>. Evidence from mice suggests that cutting the tail tip increases the sensitivity to pain not only at the tip, but the tail as a whole, due to an effect known as hyperalgesia. Similarly, it has been found in humans that circumcised male babies show more pain responses when they are vaccinated six months later, probably due to the same effect. Hence, 'we know that young animals feel pain and the persistence of that sensitivity can endure for months afterwards'.<sup>6</sup>

A possible explanation for the belief of some dog breeders that puppies feel negligible pain on docking is that very young puppies may be physically incapable of displaying some of the behaviours that would indicate pain



Open wound as a result of home docking © RNZSPCA

(while young lambs, being a prey species, are more active at the same age). In the case of lambs, a 2004 report from the Royal (Dick) School, Edinburgh, in the *Veterinary Record*, stated that 'there is now substantial evidence that [tail docking of lambs] is painful at all ages'<sup>7</sup>.

The Animal Welfare Veterinary Team of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) commented in 2002: '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 of *The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986*' and that 'the Act would not allow the procedure of tail docking in puppies without the use of an anaesthetic'<sup>8</sup>.

## 2.4 Long-term pain from tail-docking

As with many humans, dogs may live with long-term pain without it being very obvious. There is evidence that dogs may suffer from some types of 'pathological' long-term pain as a result of the tissue damage caused by docking. Pathological pain can be characterised by one or more of the following:<sup>8,9</sup>

- Spontaneous pain (in the absence of an obvious cause);
- Flare reaction (widening of the painful area);
- Exaggerated response to a painful stimulus (hyperalgesia);
- Referred pain (pain spreads from site of injury to other tissues);
- 'Sympathetic dystrophy' (a pathological interaction between the sensory and the sympathetic nervous system, that controls many of the body's organs and glands).



*Weimaraner with hairless stump resulting from docking*  
© Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance

In humans, amputation is often associated with long-term pain; about one fifth of amputees report attacks from 'phantom limb' pain or from stump pain even two years after amputation. Pain also occurs in a small number of people who experience limb amputation very early in life, suggesting that this may be possible in dogs.<sup>4</sup>

Dogs may suffer pain from neuromas caused by tail-docking. Severing nerves in mammalian species produces physiological and biochemical changes, including spontaneous nerve tissue activity. One result is the formation of neuromas, swollen bundles of regenerating nerve fibres that develop when nerves are severed. These can persist for weeks or indefinitely, causing spontaneous nerve activity that could be perceived as pain. Dogs may therefore have increased sensitivity or pain in their tail stumps for long after the stump has apparently healed. Neuromas have been observed in lamb stumps when the lambs were slaughtered six months after docking<sup>4</sup> and have also been reported in dogs.<sup>8</sup>

Anecdotal accounts strongly suggest that tail stumps can cause long-term pain. In one study three dogs with docked tails were euthanised for perceived behavioural problems, and all of them were found to have neuromas, even though they had been docked many years previously. It is possible that these dogs were seen as having a bad temperament when in fact their behaviour was a subtle sign that they had chronic pain. A 2003 review of tail docking in the *Australian Veterinary Journal* commented: 'While researching this paper the authors obtained several anecdotal accounts of docked dogs with extremely sensitive tail stumps and other odd, stump-associated, behaviours'.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. HEALTH AND WELFARE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TAIL-DOCKED DOGS**

#### **3.1 Hernia and incontinence**

Because of the relationship between the muscles in the dog's tail, back and pelvic area, tail-docking can have long-term consequences for the functioning of the muscles associated with the rectum, anus and pelvis. Chronic health problems associated with damage or degeneration of the tail and pelvic muscles include an increased risk of faecal incontinence, acquired urinary incontinence and perineal hernia (when the rectum, abdominal contents or pelvic contents break through the muscular wall of the pelvic cavity).

As the tail is essentially an extension of the dog's back and spine, part of the musculature of the tail is formed from muscles associated with the functioning of the dog's hind body as a whole. The dorsal (upper) muscles of the tail are direct continuations of the musculature of the upper side of the dog's trunk and their tendons attach to the tail vertebrae (coccygeal vertebrae). The *rectococcygeus* and the *levator ani* muscles are associated with the perineum (the area surrounding the anal canal and urogenital tract) and also attach to the tail vertebrae. The *rectococcygeus* muscle forms part of the hind wall of the dog's trunk around the anus and the attachment of

this muscle on the tail helps to support, anchor and stabilise the anal canal and the rectum. The *levator ani* muscle similarly surrounds the genitalia and the rectum and helps to contain the contents of the pelvic cavity. Both of these muscles also have roles in moving the tail (either up and down and from side to side) and in movements involved in the process of defecation.<sup>9</sup> Tail-docking involves the removal of muscle, tendons and vertebrae.

Cutting off the tail therefore affects muscles involved in important functions such as defecation and maintaining the strength of the pelvic musculature. From the mid-1980s onwards it has been suggested that these muscles may fail to develop properly in a puppy after docking, or may degenerate if an adult dog is docked. There is evidence that flat-faced (brachycephalic) breeds, such as the Boxer, which are traditionally tail-docked, have a predisposition to perineal hernia, and also that the *levator ani* and *coccygeus* muscles are not fully developed in docked Corgis as compared to long-tailed Corgis.<sup>9</sup>

Urinary incontinence (sphincter mechanism incompetence) is related to inadequacy of the pelvic muscles. Urinary incontinence in bitches has been found to be more common in breeds such as the Old English Sheepdog, Rottweiler and Doberman (traditionally docked breeds), while there was a reduced risk in the Labrador Retriever and the German Shepherd (traditionally undocked dogs). The association between tail docking and acquired urinary incontinence was independent of other factors such as the size of the dog.<sup>4,9</sup> In large breeds it has been estimated that the incidence of urinary incontinence in spayed female dogs is as high as 30% and a 1997 review in *Veterinary Record* concluded that 'Docking itself appears to be a risk factor'<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.2 Movement, communication and behaviour

Most animals whose lifestyles require agility have tails; the dog's tail both supports and stabilises the back and aids balance in various activities.<sup>4,8</sup>

Dogs' tails (i.e. the tail's carriage and movement) are very important in communicating the dog's emotional state and mood, including friendliness, dominance, submission and antagonism. This applies equally to the dog's relationship with people and with other dogs. It is clear that removing the tail deprives a dog of what the British Veterinary Association refers to as a 'vital form of canine expression'. Docking can lead to misunderstandings in social interaction with people and with other dogs, which could have serious consequences. In particular, children may find it much harder to understand the mood and intentions of a dog whose tail has been removed.<sup>4,8</sup> Dogs without tails and those with tails may find it difficult to communicate with each other efficiently and this could lead to increased aggression.

The pain and distress caused by tail-docking may also negatively affect the socialisation process in puppies. A 2003 review points out that '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 is unquestioned, the justification for subjecting any dog to this experience needs careful consideration'.<sup>4</sup>



Old English Sheepdog with tail © Animal Photography



Old English Sheepdog with docked tail © Animal Photography

## 4. DOES TAIL-DOCKING PREVENT INJURY?

### 4.1 Evidence from veterinary clinic records

A common argument of the proponents of tail-docking is that dogs with undocked tails are likely to suffer tail injuries. This view is not supported by the evidence that exists from records of dogs attending veterinary clinics, which indicate that tail injury requiring veterinary attention is a relatively rare event. In addition, although there is a lack of large-scale controlled studies of docked and undocked dogs of the same breed, the evidence that exists does not support the claim that undocked dogs are at higher risk of tail injury.

The records of over 12,000 dogs in the small animal practice teaching unit of the Royal (Dick) School at Edinburgh, included only 47 cases of tail injury. In addition, there was no statistically significant difference in the rate of tail injuries (fractures, lacerations, skin problems, etc.) between docked and undocked dogs.<sup>11,4</sup>

In Australia an analysis of 2000 visits to an animal emergency clinic found only 3 cases of tail injuries, all of which were due to problems that arose just post-docking.<sup>4</sup>

A 1996 study of veterinary records from 10 clinics in Denmark found that out of 70,000 dogs treated in a year there were 26 incidents of tail injuries (i.e. a rate of 4 tail injuries per 10,000 treated dogs). The report commented that tail injury is a 'relatively rare injury'.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of these records, there was no difference between the number of tail injuries in undocked dogs from traditionally docked breeds (i.e. traditionally docked before a ban in 1991) and in traditionally undocked breeds.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, it has not been demonstrated that tail damage in adult dogs is particularly difficult to treat and that it creates more suffering than the acute, and possibly chronic, pain caused by docking of neonatal dogs.<sup>4</sup> The review of tail-docking in 2002 by Defra's Animal Welfare Veterinary Team pointed out that basic first aid would probably be adequate to treat most cases of tail injury.



Springer Spaniel with tail © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance



Springer Spaniel with docked tail © Animal Photography

### 4.2 'Working dog' breeds and lifestyle

A common argument of the proponents of tail-docking is that the lifestyle of dogs of 'working breeds' puts them at increased danger of tail injury. This is unconvincing for a number of reasons. Firstly, the vast majority of dogs of traditionally working breeds are now kept as companion animals or for showing, rather than for work. According to Defra's review of the issue, 'true working animals constitute only a very small portion of dogs within the UK... 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'.<sup>8</sup>

There is considerable inconsistency in the arguments put forward for docking certain breeds and not others. These relate both to the claim of increased risk of tail injury and to the claim that long-haired breeds become soiled with faeces around the tail area. According to a 2003 review of the issue in the *Australian Veterinary Journal*, for almost all breeds that are docked, there is a corresponding breed that traditionally engages in the same kind of activities but is not docked, which 'calls into question the veracity of the argument'.<sup>4</sup>

The review of tail-docking by Defra's Animal Welfare Veterinary Team in 2002 pointed out a number of inconsistencies that strongly suggest that the motivation for docking is cosmetic, more one of breed standards and tradition than of preventing injury or fouling of the dog:<sup>8</sup>

- Foxhounds and sheepdogs are the most common working dogs that are undocked, yet have an extremely active life involving moving in woodland and scrub. The Defra review states that there appears to be no evidence that they suffer damaged tails.
- A number of breeds of spaniels (Cocker, Springer, etc.) and terriers (Jack Russell, Airedale, West Highland, etc.) and Old English sheepdogs are still docked, but there are anomalies within each variety. Thus some spaniels -Cavalier King Charles, Irish Water and others - are undocked. Although many terriers are docked, others - such as Bedlington, Bull, Skye - are not docked. Many large breeds, similar to the Old English, that were formerly used as guard dogs for sheep flocks, such as German Shepherd, Pyrenean, and others, are undocked.
- Border terriers, trained to kill foxes and move underground, may be docked or undocked.
- The fox itself is a canine that has no trouble moving above or underground with a full tail. The Defra review points out that there is no evidence that foxes suffer tail injuries related to their physical form or behaviour.



*Cocker Spaniel with tail © Nicky Macbeth*



*Cocker Spaniel with docked tail © Animal Photography*

The fact that some breeds of working dog are docked and that other breeds that work in similarly rough terrain are not docked suggests that it is not necessary to dock working dogs' tails to prevent injury and that in reality docking is being carried out for cosmetic reasons. Moreover, most docked dogs are kept as companion animals or as show dogs and there can be no argument for docking their tails.

Some claim that docking is necessary to prevent long-haired breeds becoming soiled with faeces around the tail area. The Defra review stresses that Afghan hounds, Bearded Collies and Maltese terriers have long-haired coats and tails and do not require docking to avoid fouling of the tail 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. VIEWS OF THE VETERINARY AND RELATED PROFESSIONS

All the principal veterinary professional bodies are opposed to tail-docking except for therapeutic or, in the case of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, genuinely preventive reasons.

### 5.1 Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons position statement of 2005 includes the following:

*‘The Royal College has for many years been firmly opposed to the docking of dogs’ tails, whatever the age of the dog, by anyone, unless it can be shown truly to be required for therapeutic or truly prophylactic reasons.*

*Docking cannot be defined as prophylactic unless it is undertaken for the necessary protection of the given dog from risks to that dog of disease or injury which is likely to arise in the future from the retention of the entire tail. The test of likelihood is whether or not such outcome will probably arise in the case of that dog if it is not docked. Faecal soiling in the dog is not for this purpose a disease or injury, and its purported prevention by surgical means cannot be justified.*

*Similarly, docking cannot be described as prophylactic if it is undertaken merely on request, or just because the dog is of a particular breed, type or conformation. Council considers that such docking is unethical.*

*Docking a dog’s tail for reasons which are other than truly therapeutic or prophylactic is capable of amounting to conduct disgraceful in a professional respect.’<sup>13</sup>*

### 5.2 British Veterinary Association (BVA)

The British Veterinary Association’s policy statement states:

*‘The BVA is opposed to the docking of puppies’ tails. BVA believes that puppies suffer unnecessary pain as a result of docking, and are deprived of a vital form of canine expression. Chronic pain can arise from poorly-performed docking.*

*BVA would reiterate that surgical operations should not be undertaken unless necessary for therapeutic purposes and that docking should be banned as a procedure other than for veterinary medical reasons.’<sup>14</sup>*

### 5.3 British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)

The statement of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association on the draft Animal Welfare Bill for England in 2004 included the following:

*‘BSAVA is very concerned that...there may be some exemptions to a ban on the docking of dogs’ tails. BSAVA considers that scientific evidence shows clearly that docking is a painful procedure and that there is no credible evidence of its necessity in any dog.*

*However there are clearly some instances when the removal of the tail by a veterinary surgeon under anaesthetic as a result of disease is essential, so-called therapeutic docking.*

*BSAVA therefore urges government to take this opportunity to institute a complete ban on docking other than for therapeutic reasons.’<sup>15</sup>*

### 5.4 Animal Welfare Veterinary Team of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Defra’s review of tail docking of August 2002 concluded as follows:

*‘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.’<sup>8</sup>*

In addition, the Companion Animal Welfare Council and the Scottish SPCA also believe that docking is unnecessary except for therapeutic reasons.

## 5.5 The Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC)

The Companion Animal Welfare Council's response of 2002 to Defra's consultation letter on an Animal Welfare Bill included the following:

*'Given the continuing prevalence of dogs with docked tails, we are not convinced that the RCVS Guidance is being uniformly adhered to by the profession. We urge, therefore, that consideration be given to increasing the accountability of veterinary surgeons in this regard. One way forward may be to make docking of a dog's tail illegal unless the veterinary surgeon can demonstrate reasonable grounds for believing that there are truly (although the word "genuinely" might be preferable) therapeutic or prophylactic reasons for carrying out the procedure on the particular animal.'*<sup>16</sup>

## 5.6 The Scottish SPCA

The Scottish SPCA's veterinary team has made the following comments on tail-docking:

*"We see thousands of dogs coming through our Animal Welfare Centres annually. Amongst those animals, tail injuries are virtually non-existent. In fact, the tail injuries we do see are normally in dogs that would not normally be docked anyway, particularly Greyhounds and Lurchers. We see more injuries relating to tail docking that has been done badly, or has gone wrong, and in some cases wound infections have been almost life threatening.*

*The Scottish SPCA's policy is that we oppose the routine docking of dogs' tails. The Society cannot see any justifiable reason for docking a dog's tail on cosmetic grounds. Moreover, it appears that there are many good arguments against docking.*

*The Scottish SPCA would like to see legislation imposed clarifying that it is an offence for anyone - vet or otherwise - to dock a dog's tail except on therapeutic grounds (e.g. emergency pain relief).*

*While supporting a ban on prophylactic docking, the Society believes that, as long as veterinary surgeons do continue to dock tails, they must issue a certificate explaining the clinical reason for the procedure"<sup>17</sup>*

## 6. OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HAVE BANNED TAIL-DOCKING

'The docking of dogs' tails has already been prohibited, in whole or in part, in a large number of other jurisdictions including:

### EU MEMBER STATES

Austria  
Belgium  
Cyprus  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
Germany  
Italy (Turin and Rome)  
Luxembourg  
Netherlands  
Sweden

### OTHER COUNTRIES

Australia  
Iceland  
Israel  
Norway  
South Africa  
Switzerland  
Virgin Islands

Examples of undocked dogs of customarily docked breeds



*Undocked Australian Terrier © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked German Pointer © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked Giant Schnauzer © Elizabeth Lewis-Cracknell*



*Undocked Mini Schnauzer © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked King Charles Spaniel © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked Norwich Terrier © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked Jack Russell © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked Swedish Vallhund © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked Miniature Poodle © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*



*Undocked Norfolk Terrier © Pauline Baines/Anti-Docking Alliance*

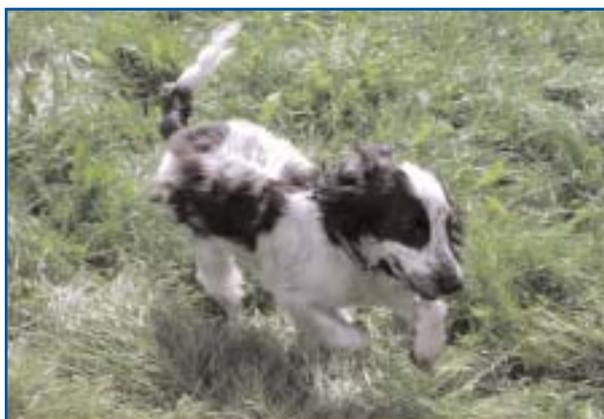
## 7. SUMMARY

- Tail-docking is an amputation involving cutting or crushing skin, muscle, nerves, tendons and bone and cartilage connections.
- Tail-docking definitely causes acute pain to puppies and is thought to also cause long-term pain due to pathological nerve activity as a result of tissue damage and the development of neuromas.
- Neonatal dogs, as with other young mammals, are likely to feel pain just as intensely, if not more so, than more mature dogs.
- Important muscles of the pelvic and perineal region of the dog continue onto the dog's tail and attach to the tail vertebrae. There is evidence that docking weakens the muscles involved in defecation and in maintaining the strength of the pelvic diaphragm, leading to increased risk of faecal incontinence, perineal hernia and urinary incontinence in bitches.
- The removal of the tail deprives the dog of an important means of expression of its intentions and emotions and can lead to misunderstandings with both people and other dogs. The pain and distress caused by docking may also compromise the socialisation process in puppies.
- The removal of the dog's tail may reduce the strength of the dog's back and compromise its balance and agility.
- Tail injuries are relatively rare (for example, 4 per 10,000 dogs treated in clinics) and the evidence does not indicate that undocked dogs have an increased risk of tail injury. It is not acceptable to dock the tails of huge numbers of puppies simply to avoid a small number of possible tail injuries in adult dogs, particularly as most of those injuries can be treated by basic first aid.
- The overwhelming majority of dogs of traditionally 'working breeds' are now kept as companion animals or show dogs, often in an urban setting, and do not engage in work or high-risk activities.
- Within the varieties of working dogs (spaniels, terriers, guard or sheep dogs) there are striking inconsistencies between those breeds that are docked and those that are not docked. The fact that many working breeds are not docked even though they work in similarly rough environments to those breeds that are docked suggests that docking is in fact being done for reasons of cosmetics, breed standards and tradition rather than out of any real risk of tail injury in working dogs.
- The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the British Veterinary Association and the British Small Animals Veterinary Association all are opposed to the tail-docking of dogs except for the therapeutic docking of an injured or diseased tail or, in the case of the RCVS, genuinely preventive reasons.

## 8. RECOMMENDATION

The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Bill and the Animal Welfare Bill in England and Wales prohibit mutilations including the tail-docking of dogs but allow the Scottish Executive, the Secretary of State in England and the National Assembly for Wales to make exceptions.

**Advocates for Animals believes that all tail-docking of dogs should be prohibited except for the therapeutic docking of an injured or diseased tail.**



Undocked Springer Spaniel © Mary Farina

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