

# FareWellDock: Ending tail docking and tail biting in the EU – Hazard characterization and exposure assessment of a major pig welfare problem

Funders BBSRC/DEFRA

## Aims:

The general aim of this project is to supply information that characterizes the risks imposed to pig welfare by tail docking and biting and develop management strategies towards a non-docking policy in the EU.

## Overview:

Tail docking is widely used in most EU countries as a measure to reduce the incidence of tail biting which is a management problem that is complex in its cause and which has been linked to a lack of environmental enrichment, health problems and delayed detection (abnormal behaviours). Tail biting constitutes a major animal welfare and health issue in global commercial pig rearing and can cause up to 30% losses in some outbreaks. Contrary to the aim of EU directive (2001/93/EC) tail docking is routinely carried out, if outbreaks of tail biting can be demonstrated. Mutilations of animals are of general welfare concern for all species and any efforts towards reducing the need for tail docking are important for the future image and sustainability of the EU livestock sector.

This project started in September 2013. A preliminary study will commence mid October aimed at establishing the time course of the development of **traumatic neuromas** in the docked tail stump. This pathological feature occurs when peripheral nerve trunks are severed such as during tail docking. The development of this feature may be associated with long term changes in pain sensitivity in the tail.



Fig 1. Piglet tail 1 week after docking (ca. 2 days after birth)

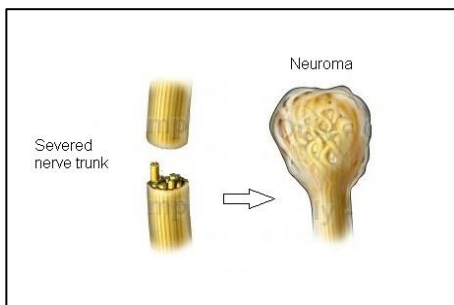


Fig 2. Diagram of a traumatic neuroma

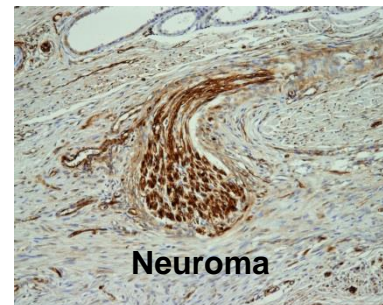


Fig 3. Cross section of a traumatic neuroma 8 weeks after tail docking

## Implications

This project addresses the interface between animal health and welfare. Through this research collaboration we will develop animal-based indicators of health and welfare, assess the extent of pain and suffering associated with tail docking and biting, and develop ethical and sustainable management practices which would lead to improved pig welfare.

**Project collaborators:** Newcastle University (UK), Aarhus University (Denmark), INRA (France), University of Helsinki (Finland), Wageningen UR (Netherlands), SLU (Sweden), Norwegian School of Veterinary Science.

*For further information contact:*

Dale Sandercock: dale.sandercock@sruc.ac.uk, +44 131 650 6585 [www.sruc.ac.uk/dsandercock](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/dsandercock) or visit the FareWellDock Project website: [www.farewelldock.eu](http://www.farewelldock.eu).