

4.1 Preventive Measures To Avoid Tail Bites

1 | Injurious tail biting in pigs: how can it be controlled in existing systems without tail docking?

2 | Managing undocked pigs – on-farm prevention of tail biting and attitudes towards tail biting and docking

Tail biting

Tail biting is a common problem in pig production. Tail docking is routinely performed in most EU countries, but it is painful and does not totally prevent the problem. The effectiveness of different measures to prevent tail biting is being evaluated from a research (1) and farmer (2) perspective.

The prevention of tail-biting is all the more important if the farmer wishes to avoid tail docking, either for ethical and welfare reasons or because he believes that the problems caused by tail docking outweigh the benefits, or because it is prohibited by legislation. In general, the prevention of tail-biting should be considered at the individual farm level.

Tail biting causes considerable economic losses;

Tail docking is a painful procedure and does not always solve the problem of tail biting and related injuries;

Where tail docking does not take place, tail condition can be used as a measure of general pig welfare.

For prevention purposes, researchers focus on manipulable substrates, genetic and use of precision livestock farming methods to automatically detect the early warning signs of a tail biting outbreak at the pre-damaging stage, while farmers focus on feeding, identification/removal of biting pigs and presence of straw. The discrepancies that sometimes occur between farmers and researchers is due to the fact that the former may not observe as scientists, but are present on their farms seven days a week. However, there was a positive attitude towards researchers as a source of knowledge on farms.

1 | <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1751731114001359?via%3Dihub>

2 | <https://porcinehealthmanagement.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40813-016-0020-7>