



Vote Yes on HB 1231 to Prohibit the Unnecessary Tail-Docking of Dairy Cows

THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

House Sponsor: Representative Lebsack

Co-Sponsors: Fischer, Ginal, Hullinghorst, Labuda, Lee, McCann, Melton, Primavera, Rosenthal

Senate Sponsor: Matt Jones

Co-Sponsors: Carroll, Guzman, Todd

What is Tail Docking?

Tail docking is partial removal of a dairy cow's tail without anesthesia or pain management.

Why is Tail Docking practiced?

The practice began because of the mistaken belief that removing the tail would decrease mastitis and increase milk quality by keeping udders and equipment cleaner.

How do we know it's unnecessary?

All available science indicates the practice has no positive effect on milk quality and negatively impacts cows' wellbeing.

How is tail-docking performed?

A tight band is put around the tail cutting off circulation. The tail falls off after 2 to 5 weeks.

How is a cow affected by tail docking?

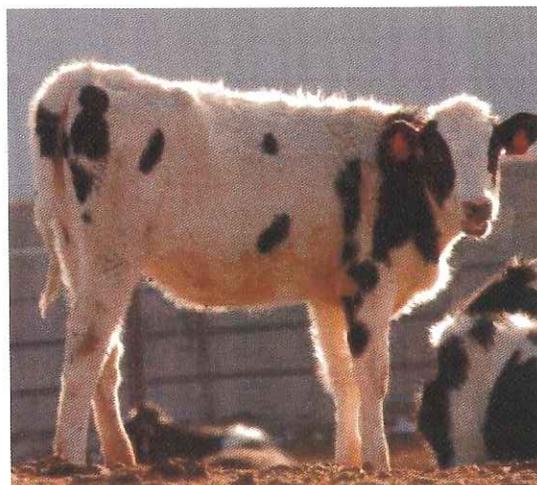
The cow experiences pain from having circulation cut off to her tail. The cow is rendered permanently unable to use her tail to swat biting insects and communicate with her herd.

Is Tail Docking performed in Colorado?

Yes, at least three dairies tail-dock. One large dairy routinely docks the tails of their cows in milk production. This dairy is permitted for over 10,000 cows and has about 5,000 in production at one time. The second dairy has 1,200 cows, but has plans to expand to 2000. Additionally, a prominent Colorado dairy industry expert has confirmed that an additional dairy is performing this practice. Unfortunately, agriculture leaders in the state are largely unwilling to discuss the practice in a transparent way.

Where do dairy industry groups stand on tail docking?

Group	Excerpt of statement on tail docking
National Milk Producers Federation	"opposes the routine tail docking of dairy animals"
American Association of Bovine Practitioners	"opposes the routine tail docking of cattle...provides no benefit to the animal"
National Dairy Farm Program Animal Care Manual	"not recommended...scientific literature does not support anecdotal reports of benefits"
National Mastitis Council	"the bovine tail has several physiological and behavioral functions...routine daily docking provides no improvement...does cause pain and can lead to distress during the fly season"



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Group	Excerpt of statement on tail docking
American Veterinary Medical Association	"opposes routine tail docking of cattle"
Commissioner John Salazar's Colorado Livestock Care Coalition	"Tail docking of dairy calves is not recommended. A thorough review of the scientific literature does not support anecdotal reports of the benefits of tail docking (AVMA 2006). Switch trimming is recommended as a preferred alternative to tail docking."

CSU is home to several animal agriculture experts. What do they say about tail-docking?

Dr. Temple Grandin	"Docking has no beneficial effect on milk quality, udder cleanliness, or incidences of mastitis or leptospirosis ... Animals that have docked tails had more flies on them, and more fly avoidance behaviors such as foot stamping"
Dr. Bernie Rollin	"There is absolutely no scientific basis for claims about the benefits of tail-docking ... removing the tail is another example of attempting to deal with what is a problem of human management by mutilating the animal."

Are there industry or veterinary organizations that support tail docking?

No

How would this legislation affect the new Leprino cheese plant?

This legislation would apply to all dairies equally. There will be no impact to dairies coming into Colorado to supply Leprino unless they intend to dock their cows' tails. If this legislation passes, new dairies will simply function as many dairies already do; without docking tails. If this legislation fails new dairies will be involved in an ongoing debate about this issue and thousands of more cows may have their tails unnecessarily docked.

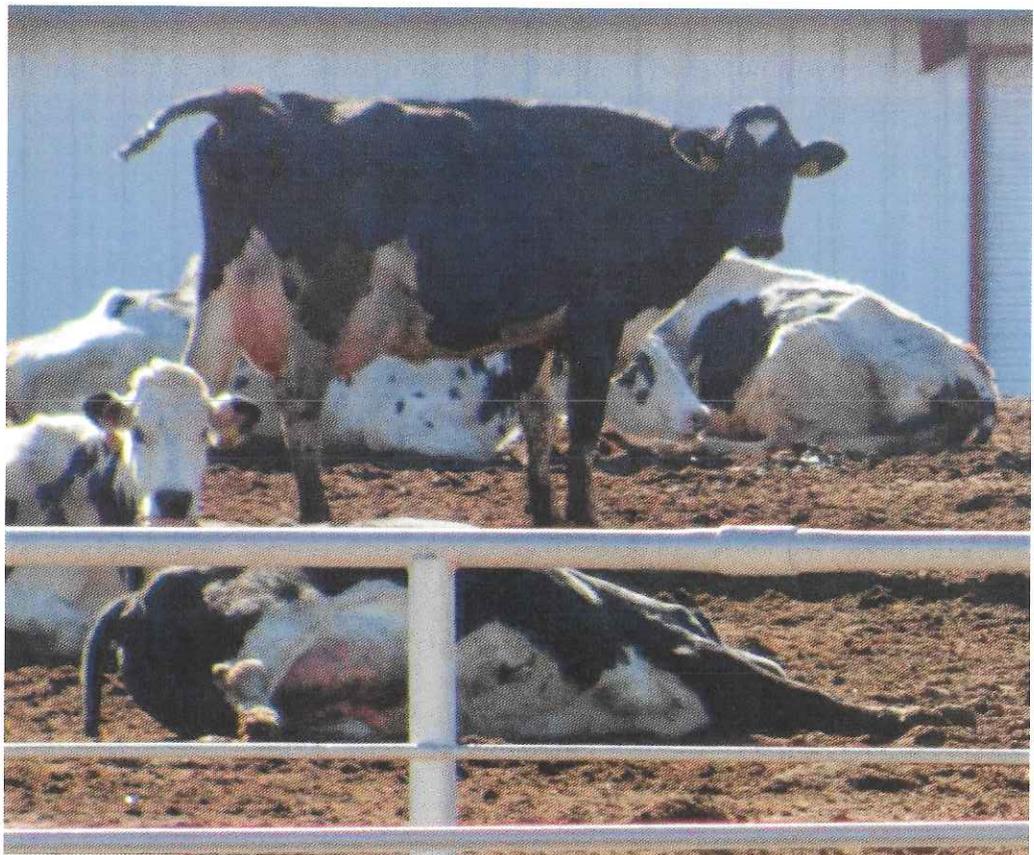
Why dairy cows and not dogs, pigs, or sheep?

There is a very strong body of scientific evidence to support phasing out tail docking of dairy cows. The dairy industry itself is opposed to the practice and it is widely known, even by some who perform it, that there is no benefit to the animal. This bill doesn't address tail-docking in other farm animals or domestic animals.

Would a resolution or voluntary program work to solve this problem?

No. Every major industry and veterinary group already has a position against the practice and yet the practice still continues in Colorado.







Groups Supporting HB 1231

Colorado Veterinary Medical Association

Colorado Voters For Animals

Colorado Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies

Dumb Friends League

The Humane Society of the United States

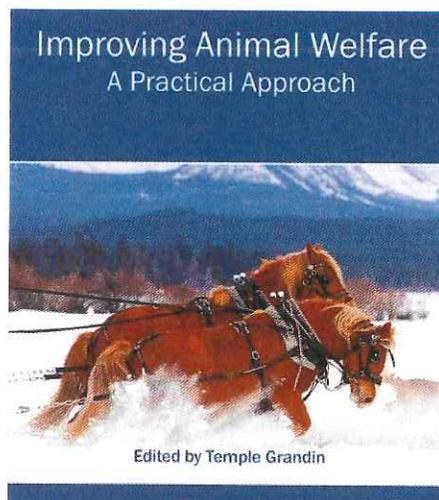
The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association

Farm Sanctuary

Animal Welfare Institute

Farm Forward



necessary to combine administration of local anaesthetic with a systemic analgesic such as an NSAID (Stafford *et al.*, 2002, 2006; Ting *et al.*, 2004).

There is no obvious alternative to castration in the production of draught oxen, but for meat production, bulls can be reared and finished intact as seen in management systems in New Zealand and Europe. Another possibility is the use of immunocastration. The vaccines used for this are now available, and it is a matter of seeing whether this practice is acceptable to producers and consumers.

Spaying cattle

Heifers are spayed to prevent mis-mating and to prevent mating of cull cows in extensive farming systems. The ovaries are removed either through the vagina in larger cows and heifers following epidural anaesthesia or in smaller heifers through an incision in the flank (see Ohme and Prier, 1974). Special surgical instruments have been developed for cutting through the flank and for removing the ovaries. A flank incision is certainly painful and warrants local anaesthesia and probably post-surgical analgesia. Rendering heifers infertile is now possible immunologically and this will become popular if it is shown to be practicable and acceptable to consumers and producers.

Tail docking

Tail docking is carried out on dairy heifers either as calves or after calving to make access to the cow's udder easier during milking in a herringbone or rotary dairy shed. **Docking** has no beneficial effect on milk quality, udder cleanliness or on the incidence of mastitis or leptospirosis (see Stull *et al.*, 2002). Animals that had docked tails had more flies on them, and more fly avoidance behaviours such as foot stamping (Eicher *et al.*, 2001; Eicher and Dailey, 2002). **Docking** young calves by rubber ring or cautery is not especially painful, and local anaesthetic either given as a **tail** ring block or an epidural can be used to alleviate the pain (Petric *et al.*, 1996b). Rubber-ring **docking** is preferable as haemorrhage may be significant after cautery **docking**. It is a serious and more painful procedure in heifers and is not recommended for them. Tails may be docked short at the level of the vulva or the tip of the **tail** together with the hair switch may be removed. The latter approach retains most of the **tail** but reduces the likelihood of stock handlers being hit by the **tail** hairs, with or without dung contamination, while accessing the udder. A non-surgical option is to trim the **tail** hairs to reduce the likelihood of the milker being hit by a **tail** covered with faeces. **Tail docking** of dairy cows is prohibited in some countries and in many natural and

National Milk Producers Federation



NMPF Board of Directors Approves Resolution Specific to Tail Docking

The NMPF Board of Directors approved a resolution on July 23, 2012 that altered the position of the [National Dairy FARM Program](#) specific to tail docking. The board voted to approve the following language:

*NMPF's National Dairy FARM Animal Care Program opposes the routine tail docking of dairy animals, except in the case of traumatic injury to an animal. **This practice is recommended to be phased out by 2022.** Switch trimming is recommended as a preferred alternative. Acknowledging existing animal cruelty laws, NMPF opposes efforts to prescribe specific on-farm animal care practices through federal, state, or local legislative or regulatory action.*

The decision aligned the organization's position with the leading veterinary care organizations for dairy, including the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) and the [American Association of Bovine Practitioners](#), both of which also were opposed to tail docking. The board's position also reflected discussions that took place among the animal care specialists serving on the FARM Program's Technical Working Group and the NMPF Animal Health & Well-Being Committee.

Specifying a ten year-long period to phase out the use of tail docking would allow individual farmers an opportunity to put into place any on-farm management changes necessary to address the reasons frequently cited by current proponents of tail docking, including animal cleanliness, facility design, and worker safety, among others. Those that may need to update or redesign their milking parlors would be able to use this time to adapt to the change.

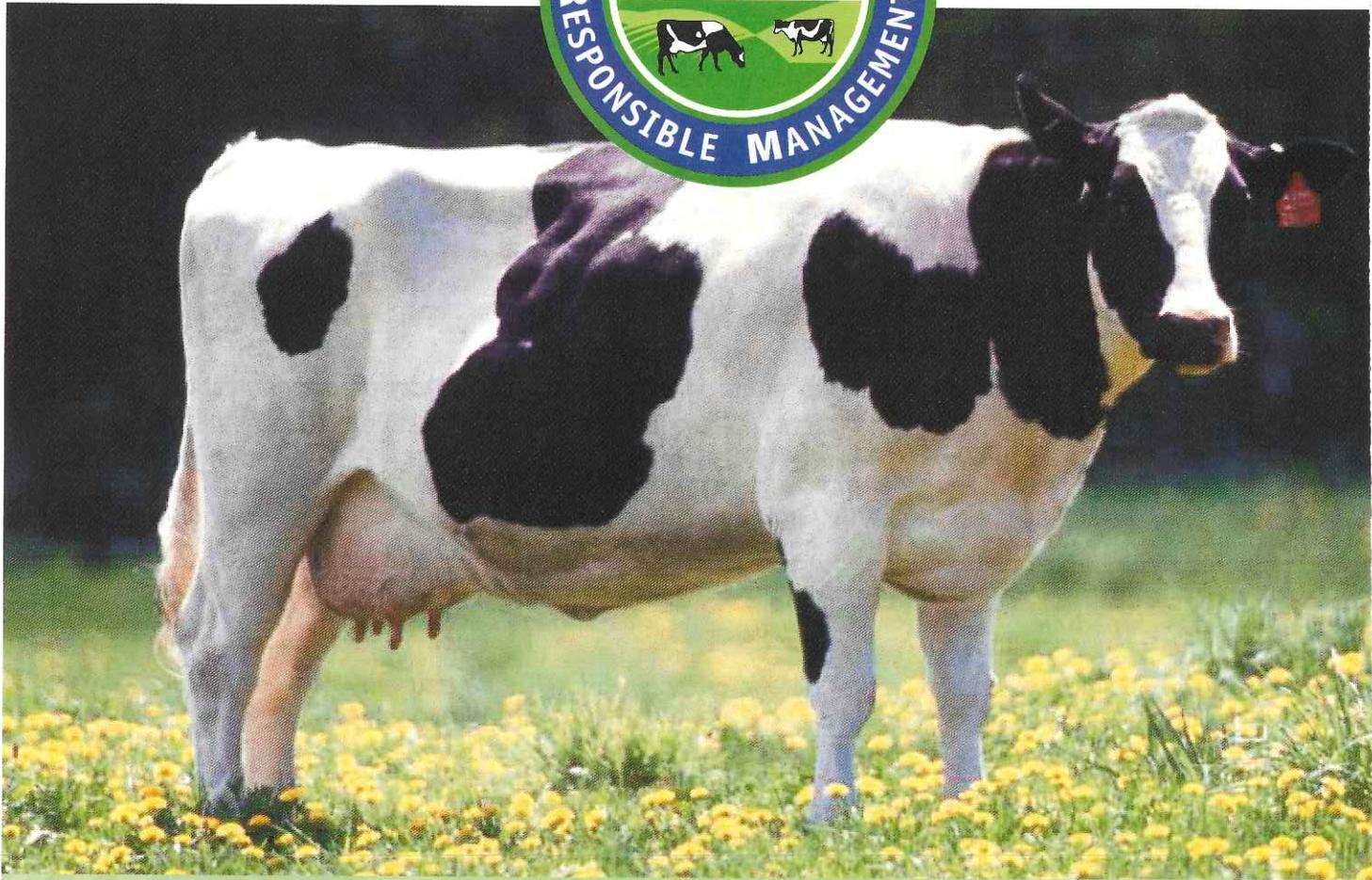
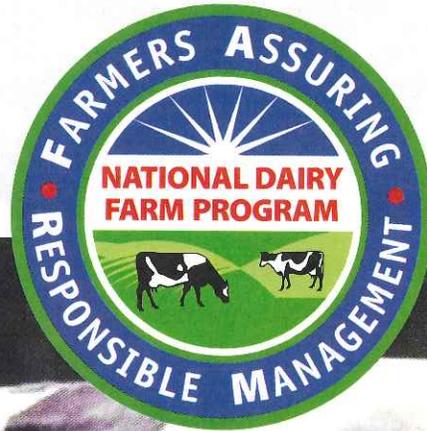
National Dairy FARM Animal Care Manual

In 2010, the National Dairy FARM Program: Farmers Assuring Responsible Management released a new [Animal Care Manual](#) that detailed best management practices for a variety of animal care issues, including animal health from birth to end of life, facilities/environment, nutrition, and transportation and handling. The manual should be used as an educational resource for producers, evaluators, and verifiers participating in the National Dairy FARM Program. The Animal Care Manual was designed to be a comprehensive animal care resource tool.

National Milk Producers Federation and Dairy Management Inc. Announce National Dairy FARM Program

NMPF and Dairy Management Inc.™ (DMI) announced on January 21, 2009 the [introduction of the National Dairy FARM Program](#): Farmers Assuring Responsible Management. A joint effort of the two organizations, the FARM Program was formed to bolster consumer trust and confidence in the U.S. dairy industry and demonstrate the industry's commitment to the highest levels of animal care and quality assurance.





Animal Care
Manual

surgical castration may predispose to postsurgical complications. There are a number of acceptable castration techniques used by the cattle industry. The castration method used should take into account the animal's age and weight, skill level of the technician, environmental conditions, facilities available, and human and animal safety.

Tail Docking

Tail docking of dairy calves is not recommended. A thorough review of the scientific literature does not support anecdotal reports of the benefits of tail docking (AVMA 2006). Switch trimming is recommended as a preferred alternative to tail docking.

Euthanasia

At times, euthanasia for a newborn may be necessary to humanely deal with complications from birth or other conditions. Euthanasia should be consistent with recommendations from the American Association of Bovine Practitioners. (See Appendix B)

ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES

- ⊗ *A clean, dry, well-lit, well-ventilated calving area is used.*
- ⊗ *Calves are housed in a clean, dry area with adequate space to stand, lie down, and turn around without difficulty.*
- ⊗ *Calves are protected from extreme temperatures, wind drafts, and precipitation during seasonal weather extremes.*

A clean, dry, well-lit, well-ventilated calving area has many health benefits for the calf at the time of birth. Wet, dirty calving areas foster the growth of bacteria that can invade the newborn calf's navel or mouth and create a disease load that overwhelms the calf's naïve immune system. A separate calving area (maternity pen or paddock) that is designed to be comfortable, functional, and hygienic allows for close observation of the cow and easier, more effective assistance at calving. Patience and gentle firmness in handling calves and cows generate a better response than does force. Calves should be removed from the cow immediately to prevent transmission of diseases such as Johne's. Pens, corrals, or paddocks should be cleaned between calvings.

Signs to watch for in the calves' environment:

- Cleanliness of calving area (e.g., frequency with which bedding is changed).
- Clean, sanitized, dry, and well-ventilated housing facilities and pens.
- Availability of fresh, clean water and feed.
- If pastured, appropriate fencing, access to water, supplemental feed, and shade/shelter.

NMC Board Adopts Position on Tail Docking

During the NMC Board of Directors meeting on September 21, 2011, the following position statement was adopted. The original statement was developed and brought forward by the NMC Milk Quality Monitoring Committee.

Background

The bovine tail has several physiological and behavioral functions, including dissipation of heat, and facilitation of visual communication among cattle and with human caretakers. The tail also serves as a primary mechanism of fly control. Tail docking was implemented to decrease mastitis and improve worker comfort. The procedure is performed on calves of various ages, ranging from less than two months of age to more than two years of age. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no improvement in hygiene, milk quality, or incidence of mastitis. Additionally, tail docking does cause pain and can lead to distress during the fly season.

The practice of tail docking has been banned in many European countries including the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Multiple professional organizations have policy statements opposing the routine docking of tails.

"The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) states "The AVMA opposes routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons. When medically necessary, amputation of tails must be performed by a licensed veterinarian." ¹

"The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's policy statement reads "The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) is opposed to the docking of the tails of dairy cattle. Tail docking does not contribute to the improved health of the cow." ²

"The policy statement of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) indicates that "The AABP opposes the routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal." ³

"The Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching states "...no benefits to cattle welfare have been associated with tail docking. The routine use of tail docking in research or teaching herds should be discouraged, and alternatives to tail docking (such as trimming switches with clippers or fastening the switch out of the way) are recommended when appropriate. Any use of tail docking, other than for medical reasons, should be reviewed and approved by the IACUC." ⁴

National Mastitis Council Position Statement on Tail Docking of Dairy Cattle

The National Mastitis Council (NMC) knows of no evidence that tail docking improves cow welfare, cow hygiene, or milk quality. NMC does not endorse the routine use of tail docking in dairy cattle.

References

¹ http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/animal_welfare/tail_docking_cattle.asp

² <http://canadianveterinarians.net/ShowText.aspx?ResourceID=1948>

³ <http://www.aabp.org/members/documents/sece.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.fass.org/docs/agguide3rd/Chapter07.pdf>

3rd International Symposium on Mastitis and Milk Quality Online Resources Available

St. Louis, Missouri played host to the International Symposium on Mastitis and Milk Quality, which was held September 24, 2011 in conjunction with the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) 44th Annual Conference. The two previous international mastitis symposia, held in 1998 (Indianapolis, Indiana) and in 2005 (Vancouver, BC, Canada), were also hosted by both NMC and AABP. These gatherings offer an excellent opportunity for the two organizations to extend their mission of communicating animal health and milk quality information to the dairy industry.

NMC President Eric Hillerton gave the keynote address to a standing room only crowd on Thursday afternoon. The main theme of the program -- presented by speakers from many different countries -- focused on mastitis management, diagnostics and therapy, antimicrobial pathogens, and immunology. The presentations "allow us to understand the variety and similarity of the problems faced by dairy farmers and the differences in perceptions applying to mastitis" according to Hillerton. There were also many papers presented during the poster session. The conference concluded on Saturday afternoon with an informal discussion session.

Proceedings

All NMC members, regardless of whether they attended the symposium, were provided a copy of the proceedings on a CD-ROM. The proceedings are also available in the NMC Online Proceedings Library, which can be accessed via the members-only page on the NMC website. A limited number of printed proceedings are also available for purchase.

Recordings Available Online

In addition, recordings from the symposium session are available on the NMC website (also in the members-only section). The recordings include the audio recordings and are synchronized with the PowerPoint presentations. The recordings were made available thanks to AABP.

AABP POSITION STATEMENT



TAIL DOCKING

The AABP opposes the routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal.

(Approved by the AABP Board of Directors on March 13, 2010)
(This statement supersedes all previous statements)



Welfare Implications of Tail Docking of Cattle

(March 21, 2012)

THE ISSUE

Tail docking is a management practice used within both the dairy and beef industries. The dairy industry in New Zealand developed the process during the early 1900s as an attempt to reduce the incidence of leptospirosis in milking personnel. The stated goals of tail docking in dairy cows include improved comfort for milking personnel, enhanced udder cleanliness, reduced incidence of mastitis, and improved milk quality and milk hygiene. For beef cattle, tail docking is used in confined slatted floor feedlot operations; these facilities are mainly located in the Great Lakes region of the United States and Ontario Canada within North America. Stated goals are to reduce injury associated with tails being stepped on by other cattle and/or caught in between the slats of slatted floors, and to prevent subsequent tail infection, ascending myelitis, septicemia, and lameness resulting from these injuries.

A variety of methods have been used to dock tails in dairy cattle, including cauterizing docking irons, application of elastrator bands, use of emasculators, and surgical excision. The application of elastrator bands is the most commonly employed method. Tail docking in the dairy industry is usually performed on preparturient heifers or calves near weaning age. An elastrator band or tight rubber ring is applied to the tail so that between 1/3 and 2/3 of the tail are removed; in New Zealand, regulations determine the minimum length between the distal vulva and the site of band application.¹ Placement distal to the sixth coccygeal vertebra has been recommended to ease the docking process and to avoid leaving a tail that is too short for proper restraint or that parts the vulvar lips and allows manure contamination of the urogenital tract.² The necrotic distal portion of the tail detaches 3 to 7 weeks after banding, or may be removed by using clean shears. Tail docking in the beef industry at the feedlot requires that the distal 2/3 of the tail be removed immediately after placement of the elastrator band or rubber ring.

TAIL DOCKING IN THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES

Tail docking is no longer a common procedure in dairies in New Zealand, and the practice appears to be declining in other countries including the United States, although it remains common in some geographic regions. Denmark, Germany, Scotland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and some Australian states prohibit tail docking. In Australian states where the practice is permitted, guidelines state it should be performed when recommended by a veterinarian for health reasons, and the tail stump must be long enough to cover the vulva.² In Canada, national guidelines recommend that the procedure be performed on young calves by trained personnel with the proper equipment and attention to pain relief.² The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association opposes the practice of docking of dairy cattle for management purposes.³

In the United States, California has passed legislation banning routine tail docking in dairy cattle and similar actions have been proposed in other states. A survey of 113 North Central and North Eastern U.S. dairies⁴ found that tail docking was practiced on 82.3% of the dairies. The most common reported docking time in dairy cattle was before or shortly after calving (35.2%). Rubber band was the most common method (92.5%) in dairies. Cow hygiene was suggested as the most common reason to dock (73.5%) dairy cows followed by worker comfort at 17.4%.

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Current AVMA policy opposes routine tail docking of cattle. The current position of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) states that *“The AABP is not aware of sufficient scientific evidence in the literature to support tail docking in cattle. If it is deemed necessary for proper care and management of production animals in certain conditions, veterinarians should counsel clients on proper procedures, benefits, and risks.”*⁵

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE ON THE BENEFITS OF TAIL DOCKING

Reduced risk of leptospirosis in milkers—Urine from infected animals is the primary source of transmission of leptospirosis. Infection can occur via contact with skin abrasions or wounds, or via contact with the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and mouth.⁶ Docking is thought to reduce the risk of leptospirosis by eliminating the possibility that a urine-soaked tail could contact the milker’s skin or face. Mackintosh et al⁷ determined that the leptospiral titers of milkers bore no relationship to tail docking, and hypothesized that transmission of leptospirosis in endemic herds likely occurs from sources other than tail contact.

Improved cow and udder cleanliness—Anecdotal support for tail docking centers on the idea that a soiled tail can inoculate the udder with pathogens. One study revealed that rear-quarter cleanliness was greater for docked cows compared with intact cows; however, no statistical differences were observed with respect to udder cleanliness or somatic cell count (SCC).⁸ In another study, cow cleanliness, udder cleanliness, and SCC scores were not different for docked heifers compared with intact heifers.⁹

Reduced incidence of mastitis and improved milk hygiene—Environmental pathogens present in dirt, manure, and water can cause mastitis in dairy cattle. Tail docking is reported to decrease the incidence of mastitis caused by environmental pathogens by eliminating the possibility that a heavily soiled tail or tail switch would come in contact with the udder. A review of the related scientific literature reveals leg cleanliness scores were improved in docked cattle compared with intact cattle. No significant differences were observed in SCC, udder cleanliness, or intramammary infection between docked and intact cattle.¹⁰ Although docked cattle had a higher incidence of mastitis in one study,⁹ the difference was not statistically significant.

Reduced incidence tail injury and improved performance—Trampling by pen mates appears to be the major cause of tail damage in indoor beef feedlots. The tail tip of the lying animal lies on the floor away from the animal’s body and is unprotected against trampling. A tail that is lying on a hard, inflexible sharp-edged surface (e.g., a slatted floor) is more likely to incur severe damage from trampling than a tail that is on a soft, flexible surface. In general, slatted floor facilities have higher stocking densities than those with solid floors, and slatted facilities with the highest stocking densities had the highest prevalence of tail tip necrosis.^{11,12}

Tail tip necrosis can lead to tail infection, ascending myelitis, septicemia, and lameness in cattle that have suffered a tail injury however the risk of subsequent infection from tail injury is low. A study on the prevalence of tail tip necrosis in Ontario Canada found 34.5% of tails inspected at slaughter plants to have necrosis with only 3.4% having infections.¹³ Another study conducted in Ontario found that cattle housed in solid floor facilities had no tail tip necrosis, whereas 1.36% of cattle housed in slatted floor facilities were treated or slaughtered for tail tip necrosis.¹¹ A similar study in Nebraska found 1% of cattle housed in a slatted floor facility to have tail tip necrosis.¹⁴ Tail tip lesions occur most often in cattle without docked tails housed on slats, followed by cattle with docked tails housed on slats.¹² The lowest prevalence of tail tip lesions is in cattle housed in solid bedded facilities.¹¹ Severe tail tip lesions occur the most in cattle that are not tail docked and are housed on slatted floors.¹¹ Severe lesions also occur in docked cattle housed on slats however no severe lesions were found on cattle housed in solid

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Tail docking makes little sense

<http://www.dairyherd.com/dairy-herd/features/tail-docking-makes-little-sense-114042174.html>

Thomas Quaipe, Editor, Dairy Herd Network | Updated: October 16, 2002

A growing body of evidence suggests that tail docking does little, if anything, to improve the cleanliness of cows.

Without that justification, tail docking makes little sense. If clean is what you want, you can get a lot more bang for your buck by keeping the cows' environment clean rather than docking their tails.

If you are now docking tails, consider stopping the practice. That way, you will save time and money, the cows will have their natural fly-swatting apparatus intact, and you will duck any lingering questions over animal welfare. A suitable compromise is to trim the switches rather than dock the tails.

During the mid-1990s, tail docking experienced an upsurge in popularity. Several prominent consultants went out and proclaimed that the cows seem to stay cleaner when their tails are docked. But their comments were based on personal on-farm observation rather than controlled research.

Research indicates otherwise

A recent study by the University of Wisconsin found that tail docking provides no advantage from a cleanliness standpoint. The study was conducted at eight commercial dairy operations with free-stalls. The study looked at 1,250 cows - half of them docked, and the other half not.

The Wisconsin research, reported in this month's issue of the Journal of Dairy Science, found no significant differences, either, in terms of udder health. No significant differences in somatic cell count or rate of intramammary infection were found between docked cows and those that weren't docked.

Perhaps the only remaining justification for tail docking is one involving worker convenience. Certainly, when tails are docked, it's more convenient for milkers in parallel or rotary parlors to attach milking units from behind the cow through the hind legs. But, this problem can be mitigated by trimming the switches on the tails.

Other studies agree

The Wisconsin findings are supported by other research studies.

"Until evidence emerges that tail docking has benefits to animal well-being, health or public health, the routine practice of tail docking should be discouraged," a group of University of

California-Davis researchers reported in the May 2002 issue of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

In other research findings:

- Researchers from the University of British Columbia found no significant difference in udder cleanliness between cows in free-stalls that were docked and those that weren't. They couldn't find any differences, either, in terms of mastitis rates or somatic cell counts. The researchers concluded, "Given these disadvantages and the lack of cleanliness and udder health benefits associated with (tail) docking, we see little merit to adopting this procedure." Their research appeared in the January 2001 edition of the Journal of Dairy Science.
- Another Canadian research team found that tail docking using a rubber ring may cause some discomfort to calves docked within the first few weeks of birth. Reporting in the March 2002 Canadian Journal of Animal Science, the researchers went on to suggest that tail docking is carried out for the benefit of the producer, not the cow.
- Researchers from Purdue University found that tail docking caused cows to adopt alternative fly-avoidance behaviors, such as foot stomping. They suggested that people pay particular attention to fly control if they dock their cows' tails, as reported in the August 2001 Journal of Dairy Science.

Make a change

The cumulative body of research on tail docking speaks loudly. The early reported benefits do not exist, and tail docking is now more of a producer preference than a cow cleanliness/udder health issue. In light of this new research, and the public's heightened concerns regarding animal welfare, the dairy industry should eliminate the routine practice of docking tails.

HOARD'S DAIRYMAN

Hoard's Dairyman Editorial: It's time to discontinue tail docking

Most consumers have a positive perception of dairy farmers thanks to our track record of concern for our farms, our land, and our animals. With a proactive approach, we can ensure that credibility remains rock solid. With that in mind, tail docking is one animal care practice that should be permanently discontinued. Study after study confirms there is little scientific evidence to defend it.

When tail docking was first introduced, it was promoted as a way to improve udder health, cleanliness, and worker comfort. As the practice spread from New Zealand to Australia and then to other dairy regions, scientists began taking a closer look at it and discovered these claims were all unfounded.

The University of Tennessee's Peter Krawczel does a great job detailing the studies that investigated tail docking on page 189 of this issue. Each and every investigation confirms that there are no differences in cell counts, production levels, or cleanliness between cows with or without tails. What studies have found is that bovines with docked tails actually have more flies, not less, compared to counterparts with tails. The only remaining possible defense in support of tail docking is worker comfort. That can be easily remedied by trimming switches once or twice a year.

We all need to step back and take an outside look at our farms using the vantage point of the consumer who may be visiting our operation for the first time. We can easily explain a practice such as dehorning which can be a safety issue for other animals and those who care for them.

When it comes to tail docking, it doesn't really benefit the cow, employee health, or product quality. Both Canadian and American veterinary associations agree and are on record as opposing the practice. We are, too. It's one practice whose only place should be in the annals of history.

What the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program Says about Tail Docking

APRIL 7, 2010

By: **Catherine Merlo**, Dairy Today Western and Online Editor

The California Dairy Quality Assurance Program (CDQAP) worked with leading academic experts at the University of California to develop the 40-page Dairy Welfare Evaluation Guide.

Here's what the guide says on pages 10-11 about tail docking of dairy cows:

"Tail docking (removal of the lower portion of the tail including the switch) must not be routinely performed on the dairy herd. If performed due to tail injury, docking should be under the direction of a licensed veterinarian on an individual cow basis. **There is no benefit to tail docking normal, healthy tails in dairy cattle based on peer-reviewed scientific studies and governmental-sponsored research.** Commercial dairies may have high fly densities especially during the warm season. The tail serves as a "fly-swatter," so tail docking is detrimental to welfare and comfort.

The available scientific data do not support claims that docking improves the dairy personnel's comfort during milking procedures or lowers their risk of leptospirosis. Additionally, while docked cows may be cleaner, their udders were not cleaner nor did cows have lower somatic cell counts or frequency of mastitis than undocked cows. Switch trimming may provide a compromise to milking personnel's comfort by trimming the switch in the winter when the tail is most likely to be dirty, and allowing the switch to grow back during the spring and summer when fly predation is greatest."



Compliance Through Education

State Dairy Cow Tail-Docking Laws

Four states ban **tail docking** of dairy cows

- [California](#) - legislation passed 2009; effective January 1, 2010
- [Ohio](#) - regulation passed 2011; effective January 1, 2018
- [Rhode Island](#) - legislation passed 2012; effective June 21, 2012
- [New Jersey](#) - regulations adopted 2005; effective July 5, 2005

California - California is the nation's leading dairy state with more than 1,600 dairies and approximately 1,840,730 cows. These cows produced 41.4 billion pounds of milk in 2011. The dairy industry produces \$7.6 billion in annual sales for the state.

Ohio - Ohio is home to approximately 3,377 dairies and over 276,000 dairy cows who produced almost 5 billion pounds of milk a year. Ohio's dairy industry accounts for over \$7 billion in the state's economic activity.

Rhode Island - Dairy is the number one animal agriculture product in the state of Rhode Island. The state has approximately 1,325 dairy cows, together producing over 22 million pounds of milk each year. The dairy industry contributes over \$4 million annually to Rhode Island economy.

New Jersey - With the dairy industry producing over \$34 million annually to the New Jersey economy, dairy ranks as the state's number one animal agriculture product. In 2010, New Jersey had approximately 8,000 dairy cows who produced about 140 million pounds of milk.



March 5, 2013

**TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE HEALTH, INSURANCE AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE, COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Colorado Voters for Animals respectfully requests your approval of **HB 13-1231**, to "Prohibit Routine Dairy Cattle Tail Docking."

Passage of HB 13-1231 will ensure that dairy cattle in our state no longer endure a procedure that causes pain and distress.

Tail docking has long been prohibited in European countries and is now banned in three U. S. states—including California, the nation's largest dairy producer. It has been the subject of university and medical research studies going back several decades, with the near-universal conclusion that it is of no value.

Colorado Voters for Animals believes the practice should be illegal unless performed by a licensed veterinarian. Our position is in line with the following:

American Veterinary Medical Association: "The AVMA opposes routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons. When medically necessary, amputation of tails must be performed by a licensed veterinarian."

American Association of Bovine Practitioners: "The AABP is not aware of sufficient scientific evidence in the literature to support tail docking in cattle. If it is deemed to be necessary for proper care and management of production animals in certain conditions, veterinarians should counsel clients on proper procedures, benefits and risks."

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association: "The CVMA does not accept the exposure of an animal to a surgical procedure in the absence of a justifiable benefit."

University of California, Davis: "Data do not support claims that docking improves cleanliness or milk quality, but do support that cows with docked tails experience significant discomfort from flies."

University of British Columbia: "There is good evidence that docking impairs the ability to control flies. Three studies have found more flies on docked animals . . . (and) more fly-removal behaviors, such as tail flicking and leg stamping, by docked cows than by animals with an intact tails. Cows may also use their tails in other ways, such as in social signaling. . ."

Utah State University: "Given that there are . . . disadvantages and that we could find no cleanliness and udder health benefits associated with docking, we see little merit in adopting this procedure."

Agriculture Commissioner John Salazar told the *Greeley Tribune* recently that in Colorado, "we have responsible producers using humane practices." That may or may not be true; there are no reliable data from his department to back up the claim.

Commissioner Salazar and Colorado Livestock Association CEO Bill Hammerich also say we should not make tail docking illegal because it would be harmful to business interests. In fact, they say dairy farmers should decide for themselves how to treat animals, without any regulation at all.

Such a position disregards more than a century of state and federal laws that have been necessary to protect animals from harm caused by humans.

As recently as 2008, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that tail docking is inhumane and thus not a protected agricultural practice under the law.

Colorado Voters for Animals strongly recommends securing the future of our state's dairy cows by passing legislation that will protect them from this cruel and unnecessary procedure.

Sincerely,

Lori Greenstone
President

Colorado Voters for Animals is a nonpartisan 501(c)(4) organization, committed to animal protection through effective legislation. We support legislators at the state and federal level who align with these values. We track voting records, publicize annual score cards, publicly endorse favorable candidates for election and incumbents for re-election, and mobilize members across the state, as well as the general voting public.



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

March 6, 2013

Representative Beth McCann
Chair, House Health, Insurance & Environment Committee
Colorado General Assembly
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Support for HB 1231

Dear Representative McCann and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Colorado residents who are supporters of the Humane Society of the United States, I'd like to express our strong support for HB 1231. This bill would prohibit the unnecessary practice of dairy cow tail-docking.

According to the AVMA, "current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons." This is why the AVMA opposes routine tail docking of cattle. Further studies demonstrate that tail docking does not improve milk cleanliness, and alternatives such as switch trimming are available.

Additionally, the Ohio Livestock Care and Standards Board has promulgated new care standards that phase out the routine tail docking of dairy cattle. Again, even the dairy industry has clearly spoken out against tail docking. The National Milk Producers Federation recommends that producers leave dairy cows' tails intact, because "a thorough review of the scientific literature does not support anecdotal reports of the benefits of tail docking." In California, the country's largest dairy producer, the state Dairy Quality Assurance Program stated that "there is no benefit to tail docking normal, healthy tails in dairy cattle based on peer-reviewed scientific studies and governmental sponsored research." For this reason, California has already banned routine tail-docking of dairy cows.

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States and our Colorado supporters, we urge the committee to support this important legislation.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Respectfully yours,

Holly Tarry
Colorado Director
The Humane Society of the United States

Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty



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March 5, 2013

Representative Steve Lebsack
Colorado State General Assembly
200 East Colfax
Denver, CO 80203
steve.lebsack.house@state.ca.us

RE: Veterinary Support for HB 1231, a bill to ban the tail docking of dairy cows

Dear Representative Lebsack:

I am writing on behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA), to express our support for HB 1231, a bill to ban the unnecessary and inhumane practice of tail docking of dairy cows in Colorado. Tail docking is actually an amputation surgery of up to two-thirds of a cow's tail, typically performed without anesthesia or pain relief. HSVMA is an association of approximately 6,000 veterinary professionals nationwide, with a focus on the health and welfare of all animals, including dairy cows.

There is ample scientific evidence to support common-sense reform on this issue. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) opposes routine tail docking, stating "current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons." The industry's own major trade association, the National Milk Producers Federation, officially opposes the practice, citing "a thorough review of the scientific literature does not support anecdotal reports of the benefits of tail docking."

Furthermore, the tail docking practice has already been banned in the number one dairy-producing state of California (2009), in Ohio (2011) and in Rhode Island (2012), whose largest animal agriculture sector is dairy production. Numerous European Union countries have also banned the practice.

By ending the cruel practice of tail docking of dairy cows Colorado will be adopting a more modern science-based animal care standard. There are no costs associated with terminating the practice, and it is also good public policy.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this important animal protection legislation.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA
HSVMA Veterinary Advisor
bhodges@hsvma.org



COLORADO FEDERATION
OF ANIMAL WELFARE AGENCIES

January 18, 2013

Governor John Hickenlooper
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax Denver, CO 80203

Re: Support of a bill to ban dairy cow tail-docking

Dear Governor Hickenlooper:

The Colorado Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies (CFAWA) supports the passage of legislation to ban the inhumane practice of "tail-docking" dairy cows.

CFAWA is a federation of local, county, state and national animal care, control and health organizations. We have over 50 member agencies serving the needs of Colorado's animals and people.

Thousands of Colorado dairy cows are subject to tail-docking, the partial amputation--typically without pain killers--of their tails. All dairy industry groups and veterinary associations are opposed to the practice since the scientific evidence suggests it offers no benefit to animal health or milk quality. Research also indicates the practice cause the animals' pain, stress, and increased exposure to fly attacks. Colorado is known as a leader among western states for direct, hands-on services for animals and CFAWA is committed to seeing our laws reflect our societal values.

Colorado should prohibit the unnecessary practice of tail-docking dairy cows because science clearly indicates it's unnecessary and because animals raised for food deserve humane treatment.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information and thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Lisa Pedersen
President, Colorado Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies

COLORADO FEDERATION OF ANIMAL WELFARE AGENCIES

P.O. Box 22603
Denver, CO 80222
CFAWA.org



Deborah L. Foote, MPA
State Legislative Director-Southwest Region
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
P.O. Box 3072
Nederland, CO 80466

January 17, 2013

Hon. Steve Lebsack
Hon. Matt Jones
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Support of a bill to ban dairy cow tail-docking

Dear Representative Lebsack and Senator Jones:

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), on behalf of over 35,000 Colorado members, supports the passage of legislation to ban the inhumane practice of "tail-docking" dairy cows.

Founded in 1866, the ASPCA was the first humane organization in the Western Hemisphere. Our mission, as stated by founder Henry Bergh, is "to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States." The ASPCA works to rescue animals from abuse, pass humane laws and share resources with shelters nationwide.

Many dairy cows are routinely subject to tail-docking, the partial amputation--typically without pain killers--of their tails. Despite claims from some in the dairy industry that tail-docking is needed to help ensure cow cleanliness and udder health (by preventing the transfer of feces), the scientific evidence clearly shows that tail docking creates no benefit to the cow or the quality of milk produced, but instead causes cows pain and distress and results in increased fly attacks. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and numerous dairy industry representatives oppose routine tail-docking of dairy cows and are highly critical of the practice. Similarly, the National Milk Producers Federation writes: "Tail docking of dairy calves is not recommended. A thorough review of the scientific literature does not support anecdotal reports of the benefits of tail docking." The American Association of Bovine Practitioners concludes that no "sufficient scientific evidence" exists to support the procedure. However, even though major dairy states like Ohio and California have taken regulatory action against the practice of tail-docking, this practice remains legal in Colorado.

Colorado should follow the clear scientific consensus on tail-docking by banning this cruel and unnecessary practice.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions. I'm available at deborah.foote@aspca.org and 720.219.0782.

Respectfully yours,

Deborah L. Foote
State Legislative Director



farmsanctuary
rescue • education • advocacy

National Office • P.O. Box 150 • Watkins Glen, NY 14891 • 607-583-2225
www.farmsanctuary.org

January 21, 2013

Dear Rep. Lebsack and Sen. Jones,

On behalf of Farm Sanctuary and our more than 5,000 Colorado supporters, I am writing to thank you for introducing legislation that would ban tail amputation without pain relief in your state, and to offer our support.

Farm Sanctuary operates three sanctuaries for rescued farm animals, and we have learned first-hand the cognitive and physiological needs of farm animals. It may interest you to know that cattle are interesting individuals who have the same behavioral needs, capacities for cognition and emotion, and range of personalities that we all know to exist in dogs and cats.

Dr. Jane Goodall writes that “farm animals feel pleasure and sadness, excitement and resentment, depression, fear, and pain. They are far more aware and intelligent than we ever imagined . . . they are individuals in their own right.” And meat industry consultant Dr. Temple Grandin writes that other animals share with us the exact same core emotions and that, of course, they feel pain in the same way we do.

Americans are compassionate people—according to Gallup polls in 2003 and 2008, fully 97 percent of us believe that animals should be protected from abuse. And a poll by Ohio State researchers found that 92 percent want farm animals to be treated well. It’s hard to imagine any topic with more bipartisan support than the humane treatment of animals.

As you know, there is no longer a single dairy group that supports chopping off cows’ tails. Obviously, amputation without pain relief is painful. Similarly obvious is the fact that cows need their tails. Science proves that this procedure causes the animals’ severe pain and distress and that without their tails, cattle are subject to increased painful fly strikes.

The process continues out of habit, despite having no support from the American Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, National Mastitis Council, National Milk Producers Federation, or American Association of Bovine Practitioners. Explains Thomas Quaipe, editor of *Dairy Herd Management*, “[t]he cumulative body of research on tail docking speaks loudly . . . The dairy industry should eliminate the routine practice of docking tails.” In response to this scientific consensus, California, the number one dairy state in the country, has banned the practice.

Thank you for your compassion for farm animals; I am at your disposal to provide assistance as you work to pass this compassionate legislation.

Sincerely,

Bruce Friedrich
Senior Director for Strategic Initiatives
Farm Sanctuary



PROMOTING CONSCIENTIOUS FOOD CHOICES,
REDUCING FARM ANIMAL SUFFERING, AND
ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE.

FARMFORWARD

January 17, 2013

Hon. Steve Lebsock
Hon. Matt Jones
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax

Denver, CO 80203

Re: Support of a bill to ban dairy cow tail-docking

Dear Representative Lebsock and Senator Jones:

On behalf of the sustainable farmers with whom we work as well as our supporters in Colorado, Farm Forward (www.farmforward.com) fully supports the passage of a bill to ban dairy cow tail docking. This bill prohibits the outdated practice of amputating a cow's tail without painkillers. The proposed regulations reflect the clear scientific consensus best stated by the American Veterinary Medical Association: "[c]urrent scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons."

Farm Forward provides business and marketing consultation to sustainable farmers across the United States. Among Farm Forward's supporters are Martha Stewart, authors Jonathan Safran Foer, Jonathan Franzen, and Margaret Atwood, and sustainable farmers such as Frank Reese, Paul Willis, and Bill Niman.

Farms in Colorado tend to be smaller and family operated. Colorado's residents, grocery stores, restaurants, schools, and other entities are eager to purchase products from these local farms. Yet, as consumers learn about the horrors of industrial farming they also want assurance that the animal products they purchase come from humane farms. Your bill will help farmers assure potential consumers that one of the most well-known industrial farming abuses—dairy cow tail docking—was not used on their farms. The act will give Colorado farmers a competitive edge over "local" farms in neighboring states that do not have similar laws on the books. More importantly, it will give Colorado farmers a marketing edge over the large industrial farms from the mid-west and make Colorado's animal agriculture a positive example for the rest of the country.

A step toward making Colorado's farmers more competitive is to pass this important bill.

Respectfully,

Steven Jay Gross, Ph.D.
Chairman // Farm Forward



January 21, 2013

Hon. Steve Lebsack
Hon. Matt Jones
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax Denver, CO 80203

Re: Bill to ban dairy cow tail-docking

Dear Representative Lebsack and Senator Jones:

On behalf of Compassion in World Farming and our Colorado supporters, I'd like to express our strong support for your bill that would prohibit the cruel practice of cattle tail docking. Americans overwhelmingly agree that animals raised for food should be protected from inhumane treatment. In fact, An American Farm Bureau poll found that 95 percent of Americans believe farm animals should be well-cared for. By passing this bill into law, Colorado will continue being a leader on animal welfare by taking a stand against the cruel and unnecessary docking of dairy cow's tails.

The scientific consensus on dairy cow tail docking is clear and best summarized by Dr. Bernard Rollin, "There is absolutely no scientific basis for claims about the benefits of tail-docking" Additionally, the American Veterinarian Medical Associations elaborates on its opposition to routine tail-docking: "Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons."

Thank you for your sponsorship of this important bill and the leadership you've shown on behalf animals.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Yours sincerely,

Leah Garcés

USA Director, Compassion in World Farming
P.O. Box 1601, Decatur, GA 30031 (404)-313-7838
Leah.Garces@ciwf.org
www.ciwf.org , www.compassioninfoodbusiness.org



An HSUS Report: Welfare Issues with Tail Docking of Cows in the Dairy Industry

Abstract

Banned in several European countries, as well as the state of California, and opposed and criticized by the American Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, experts, scientists, and representatives of industry, tail docking of cows in the dairy industry—the partial amputation of up to two-thirds of the tail, typically performed without anesthetic—is still permitted in most of the United States. Scientific studies have shown the mutilation to cause serious welfare problems for animals, including distress, pain, and increased fly attacks.

Introduction

Tail docking of cows in the dairy industry*—the partial amputation of up to two-thirds of the tail—is a procedure typically performed without anesthetic¹ and is accomplished by the application of a tight, rubber ring that restricts blood flow to the distal portion of the tail, which atrophies and detaches² or is removed with a sharp instrument.³

Proponents of tail docking have suggested the mutilation offers a number of benefits, including improved cow cleanliness, udder health, milk quality, and worker health.^{4,5} However, some of these justifications have been based on “personal on-farm observation rather than controlled research,” according to the editor of industry journal *Dairy Herd Management*,⁶ and are unsubstantiated.⁷ Indeed, a recent review and discussion of tail docking of cows determined that there are no apparent animal health, animal welfare, or human health justifications to support tail docking and concluded that the routine practice should be discouraged.⁸ Other scientific reviews have reached similar conclusions.^{9,10}

In addition to the lack of efficacy of tail docking from an animal or human health perspective, animal welfare concerns, including distress and pain experienced by tail-docked cows, support discontinuation of the mutilation within the dairy industry. *Dairy Herd Management* editor Thomas Quaife concluded, “The cumulative body of research on tail docking speaks loudly. The early reported benefits do not exist, and tail docking is now more of a producer preference than a cow cleanliness/udder health issue. In light of this new research, and the public’s heightened concerns regarding animal welfare, the dairy industry should eliminate the routine practice of docking tails.”¹¹

Prevalence of Tail Docking in the U.S. Dairy Industry

Annually in the United States, approximately 9 million cows are raised for milk,¹² with 1.7 million confined on 2,125 farms in California, the nation’s top-ranking dairy-producing state.¹³ In October 2009, California became the first U.S. state to ban the tail docking of dairy cows, with passage of a state law that takes effect on January 1, 2010.¹⁴

* For more information, see “An HSUS Report: The Welfare of Cows in the Dairy Industry” at www.hsus.org/farm/resources/research/welfare/welfare_dairy.html.

A survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2001 found that 50.5% of U.S. dairy operations practiced tail docking. Some dairy farmers tail-docked only a small percentage of their herd, but approximately 1 in 6 dairy producers docked the tails of 100% of the herd.¹⁵ A Colorado State University 2005-2006 survey of 113 dairy facilities reported that 82.3% of dairies surveyed practiced tail-docking.¹⁶ Indeed, cows are increasingly tail-docked in North America.^{17,18,19}

Cow Cleanliness and Udder Health

It has been suggested that as cows' tails become soiled through contact with the milking gutter,²⁰ urine,²¹ feces, and debris,²² the cleanliness and health of the animal are diminished and milk quality decreases.²³ Regarding hygiene, of particular concern is mastitis, a painful disease of the udder. Scientific research does not support claims that tail-docked cows have better hygiene or improved milk quality.^{24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31} In addition, no differences in frequency of mastitis have been found between tail-docked and intact cows.³²

In one study examining more than 400 cows housed in a free-stall system, researchers found that docking tails improved neither health nor hygiene and concluded that because of "the lack of cleanliness and udder health benefits associated with docking, we see little merit to adopting this procedure."³³ A similar determination was made by researchers who studied more than 1,200 lactating cows from eight Wisconsin farms: "[T]ail docking made no consistent difference in animal cleanliness." The scientists concluded that their "study was unable to identify a significant improvement in cow cleanliness or milk quality that could be attributed to tail docking," that "other management decisions may play a more significant role in determining milk quality," and that "no positive benefits to the cows have been identified."³⁴

Worker Health

Proponents of tail docking maintain that the mutilation may benefit workers' comfort and health by reducing their contact with the soiled tails of cows, a possible route of disease transmission on dairy farms.³⁵ However, in the most comprehensive review of scientific literature on tail docking to date, Carolyn Stull of the University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and her colleagues found the "available data do not support claims that docking improves the dairy worker's comfort or safety or the health or cleanliness of the cow's udder."³⁶ Indeed, researchers in New Zealand concluded that improving hygiene and wearing protective clothing are effective in reducing the risk of disease infection from dairy cows,³⁷ and, rather than tail docking, "the best solution is to control the source of infection in the cattle."³⁸ In a later study, the scientists again confirmed that "the only way to eliminate the problem is to prevent the milker's exposure to infected cattle urine in the milking shed, and this can only be achieved by the control of leptospirosis in the livestock. It is believed that the most efficient means of achieving this is to vaccinate the cattle and prevent them from becoming infected."³⁹

Animal Welfare Concerns

The practice of tail docking cows has been shown to negatively impact animal welfare. Numerous researchers have found that partially amputating the tail reduces the animals' ability to switch away biting insects,^{40,41,42,43} particularly flies, leading to increased fly counts on the hind quarters of docked animals,⁴⁴ and increasing fly-avoidance behaviors, including foot-stomping and head-turning.⁴⁵ A study published in the *Journal of Dairy Science* found that tail-docked cows exhibited behaviors indicative of discomfort, including standing more than intact cows ("cows tend to stand when uncomfortable"⁴⁶), suffered more fly attacks, and showed increased fly-avoidance behaviors—findings that led the researchers to conclude intact tails are needed for fly avoidance in hutches during the height of fly season.⁴⁷ Scientists have reported, "The results suggested that fly avoidance behavior is compromised by switch trimming but not as severely as by tail docking, which prevents normal fly avoidance behavior and is detrimental to the cow's welfare."⁴⁸

Additionally, the practice of tail docking has been shown to result in behavioral and physiological signs of distress and pain. For example, tail docking of lambs with rubber rings has been found to produce significant

increases in activity of pain receptors in the tail stump.⁴⁹ One study on Holstein cows found that on the sixth day after tail docking, the rubber-ringed groups spent longer with their tails pressed to their bodies.⁵⁰ Another concern is the formation of abnormal growths of nerve fibers, or neuromas, in the post-amputation stump that could lead to chronic pain. Neuromas have been found in numerous other species after similar amputations, including lambs, chickens, and, most recently, calves,⁵¹ and these bundles exhibit abnormal nerve discharge patterns, which are thought to be painful.^{52,53} Behavioral changes indicate increased sensitivity of cows with docked tails to heat and cold, similar to human amputees who experience phantom limb pain.⁵⁴

In some cases, pain can be prolonged after tail docking due to inflammation and the onset of infection at the lesion.⁵⁵ It has been shown that abnormal behaviors indicative of pain can persist for up to 41 days after castration and tail docking of lambs,⁵⁶ and improper band placement on dairy cows can lead to excessive swelling.⁵⁷ Also reported to develop in animals after tail docking is clostridial disease, including gangrene and tetanus.⁵⁸

Alternative to Tail Docking

In addition to improving handling and housing management, switch-trimming—the “periodic trimming of the long hairs growing at the distal end of the tail”⁵⁹—is an effective and humane alternative. Researchers found that after comparing cattle who had been tail-docked, switch-trimmed, or left intact, “the proportion of flies on the rear quarters of trimmed cows was intermediate between that of cows with complete and docked tails” and offered that a “compromise between milking personnel’s comfort might be achieved by trimming the switch in the spring (when the tail was more likely to be dirty) and allowing it to grow back over the summer (when fly numbers are highest).”⁶⁰

Scientific and Expert Opposition to Tail Docking of Cows in the Dairy Industry

Both the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) oppose tail docking.^{61,62} The CVMA states that “the practice of tail docking of dairy cattle has evolved with the assumption that this procedure will reduce the somatic cell count and risk of mastitis. These perceived benefits have not been substantiated in the scientific studies to date. Furthermore, it has been shown that cows are unable to effectively keep flies away once the tail is docked. The CVMA does not accept the exposure of an animal to a surgical procedure in the absence of a justifiable benefit.”⁶³ In its “Tail Docking of Cattle” position statement, the AVMA “opposes routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons. When medically necessary, amputation of tails must be performed by a licensed veterinarian.”⁶⁴ Indeed, researchers from Colorado State University stated that “[t]he discomfort suffered by cows at the time of docking and throughout life as a result of not being able to swish flies is not reasonable, because the only benefit is to milkers in the milking parlor” and noted that some producers “had quit tail-docking due to difficulty defending the practice.”⁶⁵

Industry representatives, experts, and scientists who have discouraged tail docking include the Milk and Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Center,⁶⁶ the National Milk Producers Federation,⁶⁷ the National Mastitis Council,⁶⁸ leading cattle welfare expert Dr. Temple Grandin,⁶⁹ and numerous welfare assessment programs.⁷⁰ According to the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program, “there is no benefit to tail docking normal, healthy tails in dairy cattle based on peer-reviewed scientific studies and governmental sponsored research.”⁷¹ The American Association of Bovine Practitioners’ stated position reads: “The AABP is not aware of sufficient scientific evidence in the literature to support tail docking in cattle. However, if tail docking is deemed as necessary for proper care and management of production animals in certain conditions, veterinarians should counsel clients on proper procedures, benefits, and risks.”⁷² University of Wisconsin researchers determined, “Contrary to popular opinion, there does not appear to be any influence of tail docking on cleanliness of udders or legs, nor does there appear to be a relationship between tail docking and milk quality. Other factors such [as] individual animal behavior, housing, handling and facility management have much greater influence on animal hygiene and mastitis than tail docking.”⁷³ This finding was corroborated by University of British Columbia scientists who

concluded that there was “no difference between cows with intact tails and those that had been docked in terms of any of our cleanliness measures, somatic cell counts (a measure of udder health), or cases of mastitis as diagnosed by the herd veterinarian.”⁷⁴

Tail docking of cows in the dairy industry has been banned in several countries, including the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.⁷⁵ However, despite criticism of the mutilation on the bases of scientific research and welfare concerns, the practice is still allowed in most of the United States.

Conclusion

Scientific research suggests that tail docking, a practice known to cause distress, pain, and stress in cows, benefits neither animal nor human health. Financial considerations may also favor discontinuing tail docking, as increased fly attacks have been linked to disrupted grazing, slower growth, and reduced milk production and weight gain.⁷⁶ In order to improve the welfare of farmed animals and to align with positions held by several governments, North America’s largest veterinary medical associations, experts, scientists, and representatives of industry, tail docking of cows in the dairy industry should be disallowed.

¹ Niman NH. 2005. The unkindest cut. *The New York Times*, March 7.

www.nytimes.com/2005/03/07/opinion/07niman.html. Accessed September 23, 2008.

² Stull CL, Payne MA, Berry SL, and Hullinger PJ. 2004. Tail docking in dairy cattle. University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine, April 13. www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/vetext/INF-AN/Tail-Docking-Dairy.pdf. Accessed September 23, 2008.

³ University of California Cooperative Extension. 1998. Dairy Care Practices, 2nd Edition. University of California, Davis. www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/vetext/INF-DA/INF-DA_CAREPRAX4.HTML. Accessed September 23, 2008.

⁴ Schreiner D and Ruegg P. 2005. Dairy briefing: understanding the impact of tail docking in dairy cattle. University of Wisconsin Agriculture & Extension Service Center.

⁵ Johnson AP. 1991. Mastitis control without a slap in the face. *Proceedings of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners Conference* 24:146.

⁶ Quaife T. 2002. Tail docking makes little sense. *Dairy Herd Management*, October 16.

www.dairyherd.com/news_editorial.asp?pgID=724&ed_id=2190. Accessed September 23, 2008.

⁷ Federation of Animal Science Societies. 2010. Dairy cattle. *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching*, Third Edition, p. 81. www.fass.org/docs/agguide3rd/Chapter07.pdf. Accessed February 8, 2012.

⁸ Stull CL, Payne MA, Berry SL, and Hullinger PJ. 2002. Evaluation of the scientific justification for tail docking in dairy cattle. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 220(9):1298-303.

⁹ American Veterinary Medical Association. 2006. Background: welfare implications of tail docking of dairy cattle. www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/tail_docking_cattle_bgnd.asp. Accessed September 23, 2008.

¹⁰ Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. 2003. Tail docking of dairy cattle.

<http://canadianveterinarians.net/ShowText.aspx?ResourceID=25>. Accessed September 23, 2008.

¹¹ Quaife T. 2002. Tail docking makes little sense. *Dairy Herd Management*, October 16.

www.dairyherd.com/news_editorial.asp?pgID=724&ed_id=2190. Accessed September 23, 2008.

¹² U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2008. Milk cows: inventory by year, U.S.: 1998-2007. www.nass.usda.gov/Charts_and_Maps/Milk_Production_and_Milk_Cows/milkcows.asp. Accessed September 23, 2008.

¹³ California Department of Food & Agriculture. A consumer’s look at California’s dairy landscape in 2003.

¹⁴ Rodriguez R. 2009. New state law bans docking of cow tails. *Fresno Bee*, October 12.

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