Tail docking:
towards a national action plan
of French pork production

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I. Tail docking: context

- Way of implementation of European legislation on tail docking in France

=> A national check list for inspectors:
- Before 7 days if done by farmer (partial section)
- Veterinary injury findings (tail biting) or « condemned meat » in slaughterhouse (injuries)
- Preventive measures: enrichment material (*), density, quality and temperature of air, adequate feeding and watering and minimum mixing (=> a global approach)

=> But tail docking is still made in routine in most of pig farms!

(*) « Straw is the best for animal welfare but chains are acceptable » (ANSES 2013-SA-0180)

=> Majority of chains but some farms with straw in full slatted floors (« scraper system »)
AccEC: a french project dealing with tail docking

- Aim: How to manage to reduce the pain associated with
  - Tail docking
    - test of meloxicam
    - Factsheets on pain and tail docking procedure
  - Tail biting → improving knowledge on risk factors
    - Factsheets on risk factors / management of tail biting accurence
I. Tail docking: context

AccEC: a french project dealing with tail docking

Pain induced by tail docking

Manage a problem of tail biting

Plan d'action caudectomie
I. Tail docking : context

AccEC : a french project dealing with tail docking

An environment adapted to the needs
Control of environmental factors
Quality of the electrical installation

Satisfy the need for exploration of pigs
Social and health context
Secure nutritional needs

Tail biting : a major behavioural disorder
II. Tail docking: a French plan

Priority Action Plan for better “animal welfare” (20 actions)

“Direction 2: Make stakeholders of the value chain aware of their responsibilities at every level”

=> No normative inflation but industries made aware of their responsibilities

“Direction 3: Continue to work on a shift in practices towards AW”

“In each of the areas listed, priority actions shall need to be launched based on the latest scientific results as well as positive field experiences. A gradual shift in practices shall be promoted. The challenges ahead for our animal production sector lie in connecting health, economical, social, environmental and AW performances.”

“In farms Compliance with the current European regulatory requirements in all farms will first need to be implemented.”
II. Tail docking: a French plan

- A dialogue between administration and farmers on tail docking since early 2016
  - 2 dates:
    - Recommandation CE 2016/336 of 08/03/16
    - Meeting in Grange from 4 to 6th of October 2016
  - 5 subjects:
    1) Prevalence of tail biting & tail docking
    2) Enrichment material => **Floating slurry technique** (coupled with straw)
      190 K€ of which **140 K€ from DGAL in 2016** (IFIP)
    3) Risk assessment => **Translation and adaptation of « Schwip »**
      100 K€ of which **40 K€ from DGAL in 2017** (IFIP)
    4) Pilot project without tail docking => **Experimental station test**
      66,3 k€ of which **26,6 K€ from DGAL in 2017** (CRAB)
    5) FEADER (rural development fund) => **Action 7**: dialogue between DGAL and DGPE

November 2017
Tail docking action plan
II. Tail docking: a French plan

1) Survey in slaughterhouses (IFIP)

- ~18,500 pigs scored
  - Mainly docked pigs
  - 2.21% severe tail lesions
  - 62.6% mild tail lesions
  - 44% of the controlled batches (= farms) have at least one severe lesion
  - In tail docked pigs, the longer the tail, the worse the result
  - 25% of pigs have abnormal tails (deformation or healing of bitten tails)

Slaughterhouse is not a proper place to evaluate tail biting (unless no tail docking)
3) On farm audits on the risk factors of cannibalism
   – French version of the « schwip » tool, audits in farms
   – Involvement of farmers, breeders, veterinarians, technicians, experts

4) Experiments in research stations
   – Trials with long tail pigs (no docking)
   – Test of various environmental enrichment in post-weaning and fattening period
   – Observations on the process of tail biting and look for solutions to reduce its occurrence

=> Co-financing: interprofessional organisation (INAPORC) and Public Authorities (DGAL)
   Budget : 170 000 € in 2017
II. Tail docking: a French plan

3) Raise farmer awareness of the risk factors of cannibalism

- Collaboration with S. Dippel (FLI institute) to adapt « Schwip »
  - Discussions with french expert on the different risk factors
  - On line survey (veterinarians) to validate / create new items
  - Implementation in 30 farms
  - Discussions with the farmer to build an action plan

- A way to increase knowledge on risk factors
  - In gathering information from both countries
  - In order to precise the importance of the different risk factors
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3) Deadlines for the project

- Dec 2017 – Nov 2018
  - Translate and train for the tool
  - working group (farmers, vets, nutritionists, breeding technicians, welfare experts)
    - Discussion about the risk factors modification? New items?
  - On line Survey about risk factors / thresholds / weight
  - Consensus and final French version to be used
II. Tail docking : a French plan

3) Deadlines for the project

• Nov 2018 - sept 2019
  – Audits in at least 30 farms and analysis of the survey (main risk factors)
  – By veterinarians and / or technicians as well as IFIP
  – Follow up 6 months later to know the points of improvement put in place

• Sept 2019 - june 2020
  – New audit to assess the farm situation (action plan implementation / results)
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4) Trials in research station : long tail pigs

• Feasibility study: long tails from birth to the end of fattening perios
  – On fully slatted floor with various enrichments (objects in post weaning period, straw in fattening period)
  – Test of ways to stop tail biting process
  – Two batches of pigs ( different seasons / different weather conditions leading to particular ventilation conditions )

• in project (2019)
  – To carry out the same study in another station
Towards a french action plan
  - Audit (30 farms) / Trials → Expected results : june 2020

France is pro active!
  - Tail docking is not practiced for pleasure ; → Cannibalism = serious consequences for the animals
  - Research in progress : need to allow time for experimentation for efficient alternatives to docking and applicable to different EU systems
  - Do not leave farmers without solutions : it would be against animal welfare!
A concrete tail docking action plan in France until 2020, step by step

• Pilot project
  In station to facilitate risk management of tail biting in a first step...
  ...and in farm to identify field applications in a second step

• Enrichment material
  Strategy: to develop a variety of enrichment material (not only straw)

• FEADER (development rural funds):
  Experiences from other countries: which types of investments?