

R&D Snapshot

Commercially-viable strategies to reduce the acute pain of tail docking in piglets

Investigator: Dr Rebecca Morrison

Purpose:

- The aim of this project was to assess the long-term welfare implications of the cauterisation method of tail docking and to identify practical docking methods or medications to reduce the acute pain of tail docking in piglets

Take home messages:

- Tail docking with either the clipper or cauterisation method resulted in a higher proportion of tails with neuromas compared to piglets with their tails left intact. Piglets that had their tails left intact did not have any formation of neuromas on their tails at slaughter, despite a high number of pigs with tail damage prior to slaughter, most likely resulting from tail biting.
- Tail docking was shown to cause an acute, short-term stress response. Injectable meloxicam administered 60 minutes prior to tail docking appeared to alleviate this acute stress response.
- Cauterisation appeared to be less aversive than clipper method based on effects on stress physiology, pain-related behaviour post-treatment and lower trend of neuroma formation.

Additional information:

- For further information or a copy of the full report, please contact Dr Robyn Terry at robyn.terry@australianpork.com.au on 02 6270 8820

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