

Tail docking in pigs: beyond animal welfare

Prof dr Elsbeth Stassen
chair: Animals and Society



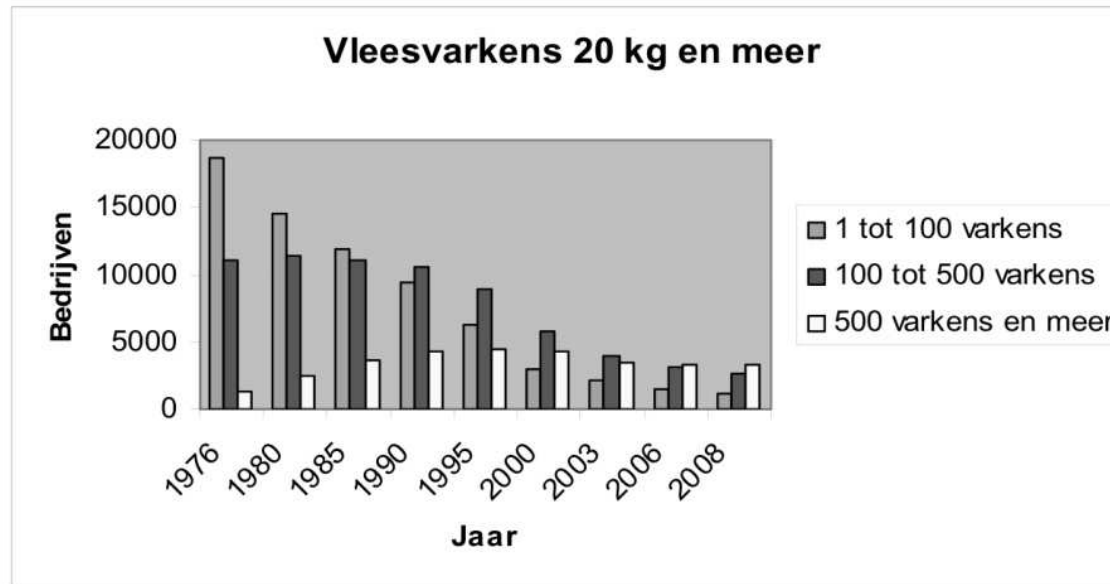
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About the presentation:

- Upcoming discussion about animal interventions
- Tail-docking as an example
- The underlying moral concepts
- Discuss the concept of animal integrity more deeply
- And ask the question whether or not this concept is helpful in the discussion about animal interventions
- Conclusion

Developments in pig production



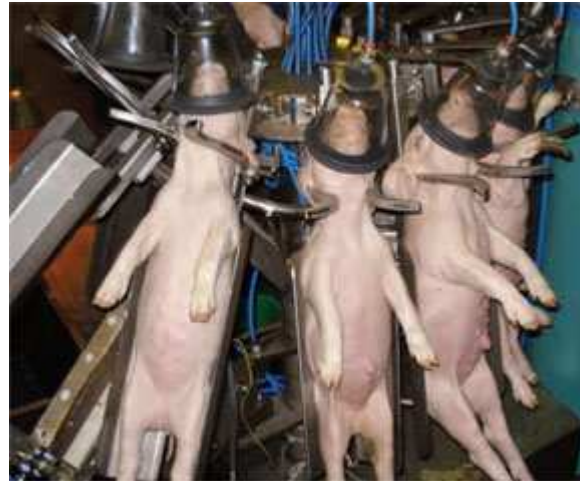
- Efficient production system, producing sufficient lean meat of constant quality and affordable to most people
- Delivery prices: €1.60 (1980) and €1.47 (2008)
- Intensive housing, management (including genetic selection) and feeding conditions are used for efficient production and to adapt animals to system

Consumers and citizens:

- Increasingly interested in pig production methods
- Opposition to intensive systems arose following outbreaks of Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease
- Animal welfare organisations have pioneered welfare-labelling systems
- Retail organisations (Ahold, Tesco) have adopted welfare-labelling systems and ask for adaption of production system
- Review European legislation on pig welfare is awaited
- Government supported quality assurance and pressure on pig industry to deal with issues like piglet mortality and animal interventions (castration, tail docking and tooth rasping)


Postnatal piglet husbandry practices:

- Canine rasping
- **Tail docking**
- Castration
- Iron administration
- Identification



Why?

- To prevent damaging behaviour
- To prevent aggression
- To prevent boar taint
- For health purposes
- Tracking and tracing



Tail docking to prevent damaging behaviour
90% of slaughtered pigs in EU

Do all animals perform this damaging behaviour?

Is this a problem in all herds?

What is known about the cause of this behaviour?

Are alternative husbandry measures available?

Is tail docking supported/opposed by consumers/citizens?

Adverse behaviour like biting and damaging tails

- Evolves from exploration motivation as behavioural needs are not met
- Unpredictability tail biting outbreak
- Failing efforts to counteract outbreak
- Pig farmers feeling limited control, increased costs, impaired job satisfaction
- Tail docked pigs 2-3x < tail biting than non tail docked pigs
- Tail biting negative welfare impact on piglets
- 53% farmers state tail biting problems

Refs': EFSA, 2007; De Lauwere et al, 2009)

Animal welfare issues considering tail biting and docking:

- To prevent the negative impact of damaging behaviour on health and welfare of pigs interventions are common practise in husbandry
- Interventions do prevent negative effect of redirected behaviour and therefore have a positive effect on health and welfare
- Interventions (method and handling) have a negative impact on behaviour, physiology and productivity for 1 -10 days
(J.Anim.Sc. 2009, 87:1479-1492. JN Marchant-Forde et al. Postnatal piglet husbandry practices and wellbeing)

Questions considering animal interventions like tail docking:

- Intuitively, is treating young animals in this way morally problematic to you and why? *'(beyond) animal welfare'*
- Do you think that animal scientists, veterinarians, general public, consumers will think differently about the acceptability of interventions?
- Which position do you think policy will take and impose through legislation concerning interventions?

Legislation on Interventions formulated based on:

Interplay between different parties of interest,
that are moral relevant agents and entities for a specific case,
such as:

farmers

consumers

animals

citizens

Method for moral deliberation:

Societal moral

- Intuition (e.g. perception welfare, husbandry system; culture, gender, upbringing, education, knowledge)
- Principles (intrinsic value, autonomy, welfare, justice)
- Facts (animals suffering, integrity violated, legislation, costs)



Scientific knowledge

- Positive impact interventions on animal welfare
- Negative impact interventions on animal welfare
- Effect of husbandry measures
- Alternative husbandry measures
- Economic consequences of interventions or adaptation system for ...
- Position society takes concerning animals, interventions and alternatives

Interests of various stakeholders and animals have to be weighted

Underlying moral concepts:
animal ethical principles *(Beauchamp and Childers)*

- Respect for intrinsic value of animals (including respect for the integrity of animals)
 - Promote welfare
 - Inflict no harm
 - Justice
-
- Form bases of various legislations

Two moral principles of importance concerning interventions, like tail docking:

- Promote animal welfare
- Respect for the integrity of animals, a principle based on the principle 'respect for the intrinsic value of animals'

- *Are those principles different or do they overlap?*
- *Are we as scientists aware of the different principles involved in the discussion concerning tail docking and other interventions?*

In what way is animal welfare impaired in animal husbandry systems due to:

- *Way of keeping and handling?*
- *Injurious behaviour of animals?*
- *Applied interventions?*

Conflicting perspectives animal welfare

- Production
- Feeling
- Natural

Happy pigs are dirty!
(Lasse et al, 2006)



Fraser et al, 1997

Concern in society: beyond animal welfare

the environment should be adapted to the animals and not the animal to the environment

why?

Living creatures

Sentient beings

As we use animals we should care for them (art 36 HWA/GWWD)

Many different animal relationships (production food, recreation, hobby)

Many different attitudes of people to animals (utilistic, deontologic en virtue theories)

Can animal interventions be defensible based on ethical theories?

- **Utilism:**

Focus on the consequences of the interventions, that should be defensible

- **Deontology:**

Focus on interventions itself, that should be defensible based on universal principles

- **Virtue ethics:**

Focus on the person, group or sector that performs, asks for interventions.

Respect for animal integrity,

based on the moral principal of respect for the intrinsic value of animals

‘wholeness and intactness of the animal and its species-specific balance, as well as the capacity to sustain itself in an environment suitable to the species’

(Brave new birds: the use of animal integrity in animal ethics. 2003. Bovenkerk, Brom and van den Bergh, in: The Animal Ethics Reader, eds Armstrong and Botzler,. Poutledge; Rutgers and Heeger, 1999)

Violation of integrity:

In all cases in which an animal's intactness is violated?

- For aesthetic reasons
- For medical reasons
- For prevention of future health and welfare problems
- For public health or food safety

In all cases in which the animals' species-specific balance is disturbed?



Difficulties with the concept:

- Moral or biological concept?
- Acceptability of handling: need to weight moral good against moral wrong
 - Violation graded on the good that intervention aims at, e.g. to prevent future welfare problems, not grading moral wrongs, utilistic approach
 - Respect of integrity as a prima facie duty, be weighted against other prima facie duties, e.g. pigs have behavioural needs that can be frustrated, species-specific balance, deontologic approach
 - Different kind of violations of integrity are more severe than others, e.g. injecting antibiotics versus dock tailing, ability to recover from intervention, yes or no able to sustain in an environment suitable to the species

Interesting debate for philosophers

Good to point out and be aware of strong and weak points of the concept of respect for the integrity of animals, especially for those working in the field (e.g. animal scientists, veterinarians)

However, it is no excuse to focus on the weak points and with that ignore the underlying concern on animal interventions, the violation of an animal's integrity.

Conclusion:

- Interventions are common practise in animal husbandry
- Increasing concern in society about physical interventions is based on two different principles; welfare and respect for the integrity of animals
- Restricted policy on interventions is based on two principles; welfare and respect for the integrity of animals
- Tail docking does not eliminate the underlying motivation of pigs
- Challenge for the future will be to focus on species-specific behaviour in order to meet the behavioural needs of pigs and in that way promote the welfare of the pigs with respect for the integrity of the animals; therefore preventive measures should be taken:
 - Short term action
 - Long term action