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# Otectomy y caudectomy caninas

Deontología y Veterinaria Legal

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# 1. Introducción

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Día tras día la sociedad se concienza más sobre el respeto a los animales. Quizá hace 30 años no se podría ni hablar de eutanasia ni bienestar animal, pero ahora las noticias sobre historias de perreras que cierran o imágenes de palizas a perros suelen ser comunes una o dos veces por semana en el telediario, bien para crear opinión bien para dar que hablar, pero al fin y al cabo para hacernos entender que hay sentimiento de repulsa hacia esta actitud.

Aun así, es curioso ver cómo la reacción de la gente que se horroriza al ver cómo una chica tira al río cachorros para deshacerse de ellos se limita a hacer un simple comentario entre amigos o familiares, y no ir más allá. Nos falta mucho espíritu crítico en esta sociedad. Por suerte, tenemos la oportunidad en trabajos como este de ir más allá del estar a favor o en contra de un aspecto ético. Estoy a favor. Estoy en contra. Después de este trabajo esperamos tener conocimiento suficiente para llegar a convencer a alguien escéptico al tema sobre la vanidad de la mutilación estética, o en todo caso, saber informar bien sobre este tema y defender nuestro punto de vista con argumentos sólidos y no habladurías.

Sobre la elección del tema, desde el primer momento queríamos enfocar nuestro trabajo al sufrimiento animal. Podríamos haber escogido las corridas de toros, las peleas de gallos, o la venta de animales, pero realmente no es algo que nos encontraremos en nuestro trabajo diario como veterinarios. Seguro que en nuestra vida laboral se nos pedirá realizar algún tipo de intervención por el estilo, y podremos negarnos con motivo. Además de interesante nuestro trabajo nos será útil.

También nos es curioso cómo la estética, la imagen, se aprecia en el mundo animal reflejado en un cierto estándar racial. Pero es una estética impuesta por el hombre, una estética no natural. Un Doberman con las orejas caídas puede llegar a causar rechazo hoy en día a un posible propietario. Aun así, se provoca sufrimiento y se pone en peligro la vida del cachorro por un fin puramente estético, involuntario por parte del animal (al contrario que en la cirugía estética humana) y nada funcional.

Como futuros veterinarios deberíamos de estar al día de este tipo de problemas éticos. Y trabajar con información veraz y fiable. A la hora de elegir el trabajo hemos oído y visto, sobre todo por internet, verdaderas estupideces sobre el corte de colas y el corte de orejas, como que refuerza el sistema inmunitario. Veamos qué argumentos fieles hay a favor y en contra, artículos científicos, además de la opinión de expertos para llevar a cabo nuestro trabajo, que como cualquier trabajo de temática libre, nos tomamos con más ganas, interés y seriedad.

## **2. Historia de las amputaciones**

Si hablamos de historia en el ámbito del perro nos tenemos que remontar a su antepasado: el lobo. Es curioso cómo han ido divergiendo las diferentes razas desde la domesticación del perro, y cada vez más diferentes al lobo. El lobo es un animal con las orejas erguidas (y más los que se encuentran en lo alto de la pirámide de jerarquía) ¿pero cómo se ha llegado a razas con las orejas caídas? La respuesta la encontramos en la selección.

En la prehistoria varios motivos hicieron pensar que esos primeros perros debían llevar las orejas caídas. Nuestros más antiguos antepasados seleccionaron aquellos animales con las orejas caídas por motivos de identidad y de funcionalidad. Estos perros con las orejas caídas eran más diferentes que el lobo, parecían más infantiles y simulaban un comportamiento de subordinados hacia los hombres. También dedujeron que si un perro tenía las orejas caídas escucharía peor, y por consiguiente debería desarrollar mejor el olfato, hecho que podría aprovechar el hombre para dotarse de mejores perros de caza.

El problema de estos animales con las orejas caídas es que cuando se utilizaban para cazar con ellos eran fácilmente lesionados por las presas, ya que las orejas caídas son más accesibles que las orejas erguidas. Así que ya vemos una de las primeras veces que se comenzó a practicar la otectomía, seguramente no tan estética como ahora, pero dando la base a que se hiciese al perro más inaccesible contra la presa, y más tarde, cuando se empezó a utilizar en peleas, en combates e incluso en guerras, para ser más inaccesible frente a su adversario.

Otra de las partes del cuerpo que los hacían más vulnerables al ataque de la presa o del adversario era la cola. Proporcionaba un método de alcance en las peleas muy importante, e incluso un método de sujeción en peleas en la que había personas implicadas. Así que lo más fácil para evitarlo era cortarles la cola.

Así, para cada raza de perro se empezó a cortar cola y orejas. Las de pelea para ser menos accesibles al adversario, las de caza para evitar que la presa los lesione o a la hora de adentrarse en la maleza no hacerse heridas en las orejas, en perros guardianes se hacía



para que tuviesen un aspecto más fiero y bárbaro, y en los perros pastores para que al defender al rebaño de alimañas como zorros, lobos u otros perros salvajes pudiesen ser heridos con más facilidad.

Aunque se haya explicado en este orden, lo que realmente se empezó a cortar fue la cola, y después las orejas. Hay documentos escritos, pinturas y esculturas que así lo demuestran.

Si hablamos de razas en concreto, no nos adentraremos demasiado en cada una de ellas, pero sí comentar algunas curiosidades históricas como la del corte de cola del bobtail de trabajo o pastoreo, que se le cortaba porque el bobtail de compañía se consideraba de lujo, con cola, y por el cual se tenía que pagar un impuesto o tasa. Tener un bobtail de compañía era signo de pertenecer a una clase social alta.

En el siglo XIX empezaron a surgir voces críticas a este tipo de prácticas, pero no fue hasta 1839 que se publicó un ensayo en contra de estas prácticas. El autor fue Sir William Youatt y se publicó en la revista *The Veterinarian*, alegando la falta de necesidad en este tipo de intervenciones.

## **Estándares raciales y concursos.**

Lo que realmente está perpetuando que se estile el corte de colas y de orejas entre los perros de hoy en día es el establecimiento de una serie de estándares raciales que incluyen la otectomía y/o la caudectomía como signo de identidad racial.

A continuación ofrecemos un listado de aquellas razas que en su estándar racial incluiría el corte de orejas o de cola, o aquellas que puede ser necesario para evitar la penalización por estar caídas o ser muy largas dentro de su raza. (Fuente: AKC (American Kennel Club) en concordancia con los estándares de la FCI (Fédération Cynologique Internationale))

### **Corte de orejas:**

- Affenpinscher
- American Staffordshire Terrier
- Beauceron
- Berger Picard

- Berger de los Pirineos
- Boston Terrier
- Boyero de Flandes
- Boxer
- Briard
- Dogo Alemán
- Dogo Argentino
- Dobermann
- Grifón de Bruselas
- Perros Mastín
- Mastín Napolitano
- Pinscher Normal y Pinscher Enano
- Presa Canario
- Pumi
- Schnauzer Gigante, Schnauzer Mediano y Schnauzer Miniatura

**Corte de colas:**

- Affenpinscher
- Airedale Terrier
- Austrialian Terrier
- Bobtail (si nace con cola)
- Boyero de Flandes
- Boxer
- Cavalier King Charles Spaniel (no registrada en el AKC)
- Clumber Spaniel
- Cocker Spaniel
- Cocker Spaniel Inglés
- Dobermann
- Field Spaniel
- Fox Terrier de pelo liso y fox Terrier de pelo duro
- Grifón de Bruselas

- Grifón de Muestra de Pelo Duro
- Irish Terrier
- Kerry Blue Terrier
- Lakeland Terrier
- Norwich Terrier
- Pinscher Miniatura
- Pointer Alemán de Pelo Corto y Pointer Alemán de Pelo Duro
- Caniche Toy
- Rottweiler (si nace con cola)
- Schipperke (si nace con cola)
- Schnauzer Gigante, Schnauzer Mediano y Schnauzer Miniatura
- Sealyham Terrier
- Silky Terrier
- Spaniel Bretón (si nace con cola)
- Spaniel Inglés Toy
- Spinoni Italiano
- Springer Spaniel Galés
- Springer Spaniel Inglés
- Sussex Spaniel
- Vizsla
- Weimaraner
- Welsh Corgi (si nace con cola)
- Welsh Terrier
- Wheaten Terrier de Pelo Duro
- Yorkshire Terrier

Después de toda esta lista de razas, veamos concretamente algunas de las que más se ven en la clínica de nuestra región, o las más comunes nuestra región.

### 1. American Staffordshire Terrier - 10 de junio de 1936 (Aprobado o última reforma)



**Orejas:** se prefieren sin cortar, aunque también se aceptan cortadas. Cuando no están cortadas deberían de ser cortas. Se penalizan las orejas totalmente caídas.

**Cola:** corta en comparación con el tamaño, de implantación baja y acabada en punta final. No debe de estar enrollada, sobre el lomo o amputada.

### 2. Bobtail (Old English Sheepdog) - 10 de febrero de 1990



**Orejas:** de tamaño medio, se llevan caídas planas al lado de la cabeza.

**Cola:** cuando no es natural (normalmente) se amputa cerca del cuerpo (bob tailed).

### 3. Boston Terrier - 9 de enero de 1990



**Orejas:** tienen que ser pequeñas y puntas rectas, ya sean naturales o cortadas, y tienen que situarse lo más cerca del cráneo posible para ajustarse a la forma de la cabeza.

**Cola:** de implantación baja, corta, fina y cónica, recta o un poco enrollada, pero no se tiene que estar amputada. Se prefiere que no exceda en más de un cuarto la distancia de la zona de implantación al tarso.

La amputación de la cola es motivo de descalificación.

#### 4. Bóxer - 11 de febrero de 2005



**Orejas:** insertadas en los puntos más altos del lado del cráneo. Normalmente se cortan largas y con los bordes nítidos (especialmente evidente cuando están alerta) pero también se aceptan las orejas sin cortar, en este caso tendrían de ser de un tamaño moderado, delgadas y con una caída lisa, tocando las mejillas y marcando un pliegue muy claro cuando están alerta.

**Cola:** de inserción alta. Las colas no amputadas tendrían de ser severamente penalizadas (todo y que no es motivo de descalificación directa).

#### 5. Cocker Americano - 12 de mayo de 1992



**Orejas:** lobulares, largas y no más altas que la línea de la parte inferior del ojo.

**Cola:** cortada, implantada a la parte alta de la línea del dorso o ligeramente superior.

#### 6. Cocker Inglés - 11 de octubre de 1988



**Orejas:** lobulares, largas y no más altas que la línea de la parte inferior del ojo.

**Cola:** cortada, implantada a la parte alta de la línea del dorso; se lleva siguiendo la línea horizontal.

#### 7. Dobermann - 6 de noviembre de 1990



**Orejas:** normalmente cortadas y llevadas erectas.

**Cola:** cortada a nivel de la 2ª vértebra, de manera que parezca una continuación de la columna vertebral. Se lleva ligeramente por encima de lo horizontal cuando el perro está alerta.

#### 8. Gran Danés - 8 de marzo de 1999



**Orejas:** de implantación alta, medida mediana y grosor moderado que se doblen hacia adelante en la zona cerca a las mejillas a nivel del cráneo. Si se cortan, la longitud tiene que estar en proporción al tamaño de la cabeza y se tienen que llevar rectas.

**Cola:** de implantación ligeramente elevada, como si fuera una continuación de la columna vertebral. Debe de ser amplia a la base e ir disminuyendo de manera progresiva

hasta llegar a la punta. En reposo debe caer recta y, en movimiento puede presentar una ligera curvatura. La amputación de la cola es motivo de descalificación.

#### 9. Mastín Napolitano - 13 de enero de 2004



**Orejas:** pueden ser recortadas o sin cortar, pero suelen ser recortadas formando un triángulo equilátero, por razones de salud. Si no se cortan, son de tamaño mediano, de forma triangular.

**Cola:** situada ligeramente inferior a la línea superior. Ancha y gruesa a la base y va disminuyendo gradualmente a la punta. En reposo cuelga recta o haciendo una ligera S y en

movimiento se levanta ligeramente por encima de lo horizontal. Se amputa 1/3 de la cola.

#### 10. Norfolk Terrier – 23 de marzo de 1990



**Orejas:** pequeñas y caídas en forma de V, muy expresivas. La punta es ligeramente redonda y queda a nivel de las mejillas, sin sobrepasar el extremo exterior del ojo. Se doblan a la altura del cráneo.

**Cola:** amputada a la longitud media, de manera que quede de una longitud suficiente para garantizar un perfil equilibrado. Recta y de inserción alta.

**11. Pastor de Brie - 12 de enero de 1992**



**Orejas:** tienen que ser altas, firmes a la base. La longitud natural de las orejas debería de ser igual o ligeramente inferior a la mitad de la longitud de la cabeza. Cuando se cortan deberían de llevarlas siempre en alto y paralelas y cuando están en alerta, mirando hacia delante.

**Cola:** no debe estar cortada, se tiene que llevar baja y recta (sin desviarse). La amputación de la cola es motivo de descalificación.

**12. Pastor de los Pirineos - 11 de abril de 2006**



**Orejas:** se aceptan tanto cortadas como naturales. Las naturales son más cortas, fijadas a la parte superior de la cabeza y con una base ancha. Cuando se cortan, se hace en línea recta para mantenerlas erguidas.

**Cola:** se acepta cortada y natural. Debe ajustarse a la pendiente de la grupa.

**13. Parson Russell Terrier - 13 de julio de 2004**



**Orejas:** pequeñas y caídas en forma de V, de grosor moderado y cercanas a la cabeza. La punta de las orejas apunta hacia los ojos.

**Cola:** cortada de manera que la punta queda aproximadamente a nivel del cráneo.

**14. Pinscher Miniatura - 7 de noviembre de 2005**



**Orejas:** de implantación alta y erectas cuando están cortadas. Si no se cortan se pueden plegar en forma de V.

**Cola:** normalmente cortada entre la 2ª y 3ª vertebra. Se lleva ligeramente sobre lo horizontal.

**15. Pointer** - 30 setiembre de 1992



**Orejas:** grandes y de implantación alta, a nivel de los ojos, que se extiendan hasta las comisuras labiales.

**Cola:** de implantación alta y firme. Tiene que ser amputada dejando el 40% de su longitud. Tiene que estar caída y, en movimiento, subir hasta lo horizontal.

**16. Rottweiler** - 8 de mayo de 1990



**Orejas:** de tamaño mediano, caídas, de forma triangular, caídas hacia adelante.

**Cola:** cortada corta, cerca del cuerpo, dejando una o dos vertebras. El conjunto de la cola es más importante que la longitud ya que, configurada correctamente, hace efecto de alargamiento de la línea superior. Se lleva ligeramente por encima de lo horizontal cuando el perro esta excitado o en movimiento.

**17. Schnauzer gigante** - 11 de octubre de 1983



**Orejas:** cuando se cortan tienen que tener una forma y longitud idénticas a las puntas y deben de estar perpendiculares al cráneo y mirando hacia adelante. No deben ser excesivamente largas. Cuando no se cortan tienen forma de botón en V y son de mediana longitud y grosor, implantación alta y cerca de la cabeza.

**Cola:** se implanta ligeramente elevada y se debería amputar a nivel de la 2ª, como mucho la 3ª vertebra.



**18. Schnauzer miniatura:** 9 de febrero de 1991.



**Orejas:** cuando se cortan tienen que tener una forma y longitud idénticas a las puntas y deben estar perpendiculares al cráneo y mirando hacia adelante. No deben de estar excesivamente largas. Cuando no se cortan tienen forma de botón en V y son de mediana longitud y grosor, implantación alta y cerca a la cabeza.

**Cola:** inserción de cola ligeramente alta y llevada recta. Se corta dejando tan solo el trozo suficiente para que

sobrepase la línea dorsal cuando la longitud del pelaje es adecuada.

**19. Welsh Corgi** - 28 de enero de 1993



**Orejas:** derechas, firmes y de tamaño mediano, disminuyendo ligeramente a una punta redonda. Una línea trazada desde la punta de la nariz a través de los ojos hasta la punta del oído, debe de formar un triángulo equilátero aproximadamente.

**Cola:** cortada lo más corta posible. Una cola de hasta dos pulgadas de largo está permitida, pero si la lleva

más alta tiende a hacer mal al contorno de la fila superior.

**20. Welsh Terrier** - 10 de agosto de 1993



**Orejas:** en forma de V, pequeñas y no muy finas. La tapa esta justo por encima de la línea superior del cráneo. Las orejas acaban con la punta caída cerca de las mejillas o hacia los bordes exteriores de los ojos cuando el perro esta en reposo. Las orejas se mueven ligeramente hacia arriba y hacia delante cuando está atento.

**Cola:** cortada a una longitud aproximadamente al mismo nivel con la línea occipital. La raíz de la cola es

fijada muy por encima de la espalda y se lleva en posición vertical.

## 21. Yorkshire Terrier – 10 de julio de 2007



**Orejas:** pequeñas, en forma de V y erguidas. No muy separadas.

**Cola:** cortada a media longitud y llevada ligeramente superior al nivel de la espalda

Hemos hecho un recuento de las razas en las que se practica la caudectomía y la otectomía, las más comunes de nuestra zona. Aun así hay más en las que se realizan estas prácticas. Aproximadamente en un tercio de las razas se contempla este tipo de cirugía en el estándar racial, pero por suerte en la mayoría es opcional e incluso se descalifica en algunos casos si se ha realizado.

Realmente los estándares raciales no los vemos a pie de calle. Hay muchos perros mestizos como mascota y sólo gente que se dedica a la cría o propietarios realmente interesados en presentar a sus mascotas a concursos están al día de cuánto le tiene que medir la altura de la cruz o si en su raza las orejas tienen que estar en forma de V o no.

### **Corte de cola y de orejas en concursos y exhibiciones**

*“Los perros con la cola o las orejas cortadas deben ser admitidos, de acuerdo con las regulaciones legales de sus países de origen y aquellas del país en el que se lleva a cabo la exposición. El juzgamiento de estos perros, tengan la cola y las orejas cortadas o no, debe ser realizado sin ninguna discriminación y solamente conforme al estándar de raza válido.”*

Esta es la referencia que nos hace el reglamento de las exposiciones caninas de la FCI. Vemos como está totalmente permitido según la legislación de cada país. En varios países de Europa, como por ejemplo Alemania, está prohibido el corte de colas y orejas, y por consiguiente no están aceptados a concurso los perros que hayan nacido antes de que entrase en vigor la ley y se hayan sometido a estas intervenciones.

## **3. Técnicas quirúrgicas**

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### **3.1 CAUDECTOMÍA:**

La caudectomía, o amputación de una porción de la cola, se realiza para cumplir con los estándares raciales o con la tracción. Pero la caudectomía también puede ser terapéutica y no estética. La caudectomía terapéutica está indicada en lesiones traumáticas, infección, neoplasia y fístulas perianales.

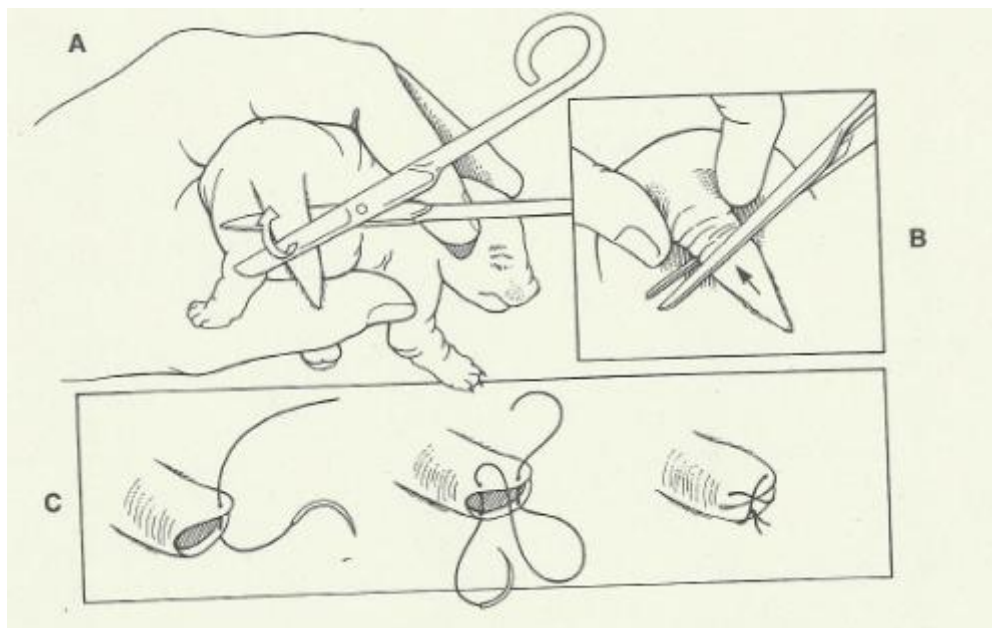
La cola debe amputarse con márgenes de tejido normal de 2-3 cm cuando se resecan cuando se resecan tumores o lesiones traumáticas. La amputación debe realizarse cercana al ano si hay un sangrad crónico de la cola debido a abrasión reiterada o mordisqueo. La amputación cercana a la base se recomienda en casos de avulsión de la cola, y es necesaria en casos de pioderma por pliegues y fístulas perianales.

### **CAUDECTOMÍA EN CACHORROS**

La caudectomía estética en cachorros se realiza entre los 3 5 días de edad. Tradicionalmente no se ha empleado anestesia para realizarla; sin embargo, actualmente debido a un mejor conocimiento del dolor, se emplea anestesia local con o sin sedación. Con frecuencia se realiza un bloqueo en anillo con Lidocaína (<10 mg/kg) en la base de la cola. Otro protocolo que se realiza de sedación y analgesia es administrar diacepam intravenoso (0,1mg/100 g) seguido 3 min después por la administración de hidrocloreuro de ketamina intranasal (1mg/100g) y transcurridos 5 minutos se realiza un bloqueo en anillo con anestésico local, proximal a la incisión propuesta. Si la caudectomía no se realiza durante la primera semana de vida, debe retraerse hasta que el cachorro tenga 8-12 semanas de edad y realizarla bajo anestesia general. La longitud deseada de la cola se determina siguiendo los estándares raciales (Tabla 1) y consultando al propietario. La cicatrización tras la caudectomía en cachorros no suele presentar complicaciones. Los cachorros no suelen irritar el área quirúrgica, pero las madres pueden arrancar las suturas mediante lamido en unos días.

**Procedimiento:**

Un asistente sujeta el cachorro. Se rasura y prepara asépticamente el área de resección elegida. A continuación, se retrae la piel de la cola hacia la base de esta. Inmovilizar la cola entre los dedos pulgar e índice y aplicar presión para controlar la hemorragia (figura A). Palpar el lugar deseado para la transección. Una vez localizado, transeccionar la cola entre dos vértebras caudales adyacentes con tijeras de Mayo, cortaúñas, cuchilla de bisturí o un cortacolas, electrocirugía o láser. Para la retracción de la piel se pueden emplear tijeras. Colocar la cuchilla ventral a la zona deseada de retracción de la piel. Seguidamente colocar la cuchilla dorsal más distal, formando un ángulo oblicuo. Rotar las cuchillas hasta una posición perpendicular mientras se mantiene un contacto estrecho con la piel para empujar la piel en sentido craneal; manteniendo las tijeras en esta posición traccionar a través del espacio intervertebral (figura B). Controlar la hemorragia mediante presión o electrocirugía. Extender la piel retraída sobre el muñón, evaluar la longitud de la cola y seccionar más piel si fuera necesario. Aproximar los bordes de la piel con 2 o 3 suturas de aproximación (por ejemplo Nailon o Polipropileno de 4-0) o adhesivo tisular reabsorbible (figura C).



**TABLA 1:****PAUTAS PARA EL CORTE DE COLAS**

<b>RAZA</b>	<b>LONGITUD*</b>
<b>Razas deportivas</b>	
Braco alemán de pelo corto y duro	Dejar 2/5 de longitud
Braco Weimar	Dejar 3/5 de longitud (aprox. 4 cm)
Clumber spaniel	Dejar de ¼ a 1/3 de longitud
Cócker spaniel americano	Dejar 1/3 de longitud (aprox. 2 cm)
Cócker spaniel inglés	Dejar 1/3 de longitud
Field spaniel	Dejar 1/3 de longitud
Grifón de pelo duro	Dejar 1/3 de longitud
Spaniel bretón	Dejar 2,5 cm
Springer spaniel galés	Dejar de 1/3 a ½ de longitud
Springer spaniel inglés	Dejar 1/3 de longitud
Sussex spaniel	Dejar 1/3 de longitud
Vizsla	Dejar 2/3 de longitud
<b>Razas de trabajo</b>	
Bobtail	Dejar una vértebra (pegada al cuerpo)
Bóxer	Dejar de 1,25 a 2 cm (dos vértebras)
Boyero de Flandes	Dejar de 1,25 a 2 cm
Corgi galés (Pembroke)	Dejar una vértebra (pegada al cuerpo)
Dóberman	Dejar 2 cm (dos vértebras)
Rottweiler	Dejar una vértebra (pegada al cuerpo)
Schnauzer gigante	Dejar 3 cm (tres vértebras)
Schnauzer mediano	Dejar 2,5 cm (dos vértebras)
<b>Terriers</b>	
Airedale terrier	Dejar de 2/3 a ¾ de longitud†
Fox terrier	Dejar de 2/3 a ¾ de longitud†
Kerry blue terrier	Dejar de ½ a 2/3 de longitud
Lakeland terrier	Dejar de 2/3 a ¾ de longitud
Norwich terrier	Dejar de ¼ a 1/3 de longitud

Schnauzer miniatura	Dejar 2 cm
Sealyham terrier	Dejar de 2/3 a ½ de longitud
Soft-coated Wheaten terrier	Dejar de ½ a ¾ de longitud
Terrier australiano	Dejar 2/5 de longitud
Terrier irlandés	Dejar ¾ de longitud
Welsh terrier	Dejar de 2/3 a ¾ de longitud†
<b>Razas miniatura</b>	
Affenpinscher	Dejar menos de 1 cm (pegado al cuerpo)
Caniche toy	Dejar de ½ a 2/3 de longitud (aprox. 2,5 cm)
Grifón de Bruselas	Dejar de ¼ a 1/3 de longitud (aprox. 0,75 cm)
Pinscher miniatura	Dejar 1,25 cm (dos vértebras)
Silky terrier	Dejar 2/3 de longitud (aprox. 1,25 cm)
Spaniel inglés toy	Dejar 1/3 de longitud (aprox. 3,75 cm)
Yorkshire terrier	Dejar 1/3 de longitud (aprox. 1,25 cm)
<b>Razas no deportivas</b>	
Caniche miniatura	Dejar de ½ a 2/3 de longitud (aprox. 2,75 cm)
Schipperke	Pegado al cuerpo
<b>Otras</b>	
Caniche mediano	Dejar de ½ a 2/3 de longitud (aprox. 3,75 cm)
Cavalier King Charles spaniel (opcional)	Dejar 2/3 de longitud con punta blanca
Spinone italiano	Dejar 3/5 de longitud

*\*Cuando el corte de cola se realiza con menos de 1 semana de edad.*

*†La punta de la cola debe estar aproximadamente al mismo nivel que la parte superior del cráneo cuando el cachorro se coloca en posición de exposición.*

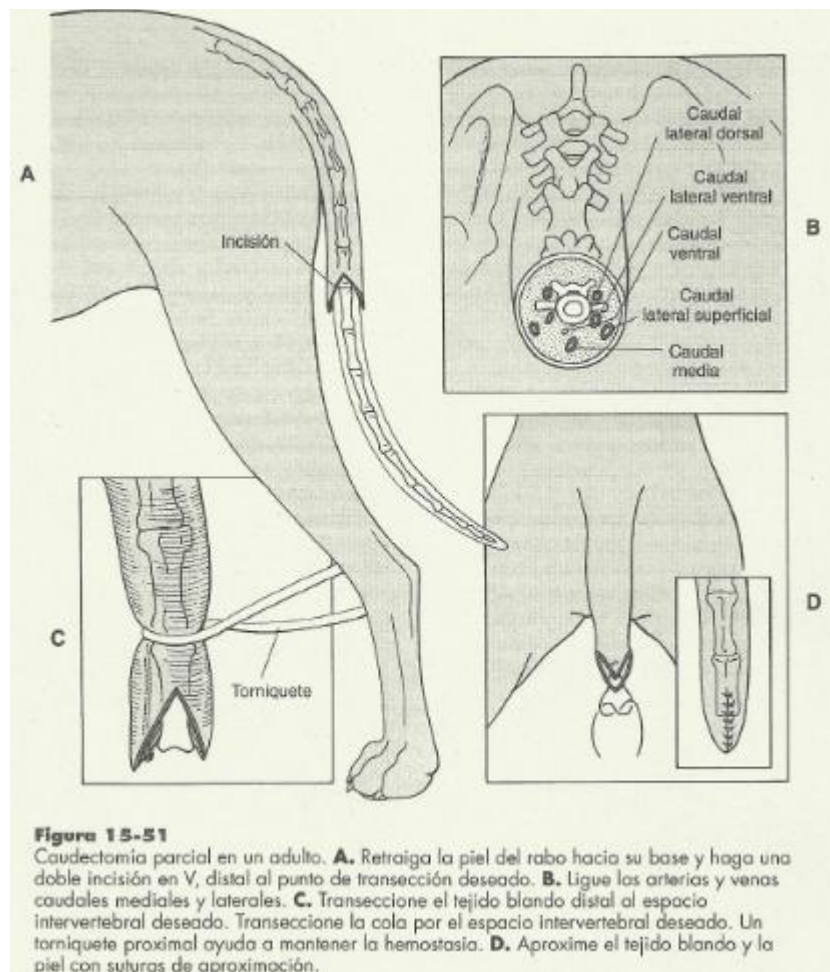
## **CAUDECTOMIA EN ADULTOS**

La caudectomía en perros mayores de una semana de edad requiere anestesia general o epidural. El área quirúrgica debe ser observada por si se produjera hinchazón, drenaje, inflamación y dolor. La cicatrización tras la caudectomía no es complicada si se evita una tensión excesiva en la piel y el autotraumatismo. El área debe de ser protegida mediante un vendaje o métodos de contención si fueran necesarios. Las complicaciones incluyen infección, dehiscencia, cicatriz, fístula recurrente y traumatismo rectal o del esfínter anal. Las incisiones con dehiscencia tras una amputación parcial pueden cicatrizar por segunda intención, lo cual suele dejar una cicatriz alopécica. La reamputación puede ser necesaria para eliminar la irritación y mejorar la estética.

### ***Procedimiento Caudectomía parcial:***

Envolver la región distal de la cola con gasa o introducirla en un guante de exploración, asegurando la envoltura con esparadrapo. Rasurar ampliamente el área de amputación y prepararla de forma aséptica para la cirugía. Colocar el paciente en posición perineal o en decúbito lateral. Poner un torniquete proximal al área de transección. Después, retraer la piel hacia la base de la cola. A continuación hacer una doble incisión en V en la piel distal al espacio intervertebral deseado. Orientar las V de forma que quede un colgajo dorsal y otro ventral, más largos que la longitud de la cola deseada (figura A). Identificar y ligar las arterias y venas caudales laterales y mediales, ligeramente craneal al área de transección (figura B). Incidir el tejido blando ligeramente distal al espacio intervertebral deseado y desarticular la cola con una cuchilla de bisturí. Si se produce sangrado, habrá que realizar una ligadura circular alrededor del extremo distal del muñón o volver a ligar los vasos caudales (figura C). Aproximar el tejido subcutáneo y el músculo sobre la vértebra expuesta mediante suturas de aproximación discontinuas (el material de las suturas bien puede ser polidioxanona como poliglecaprona 25, glucómero 631 o poligluconato de 3-0). Posicionar el colgajo cutáneo dorsal sobre la vértebra caudal (figura D). Recortar el colgajo ventral lo necesario para permitir la aposición de la piel sin tensión. Aproximas los bordes de piel con suturas de aproximación (por ejemplo nailon o polipropileno de 3-0 o 4-0, con aguja de corte

inverso)(figura D). Por último, prótel. Proteger el área quirúrgica con un vendaje o mediante un collar isabelino.

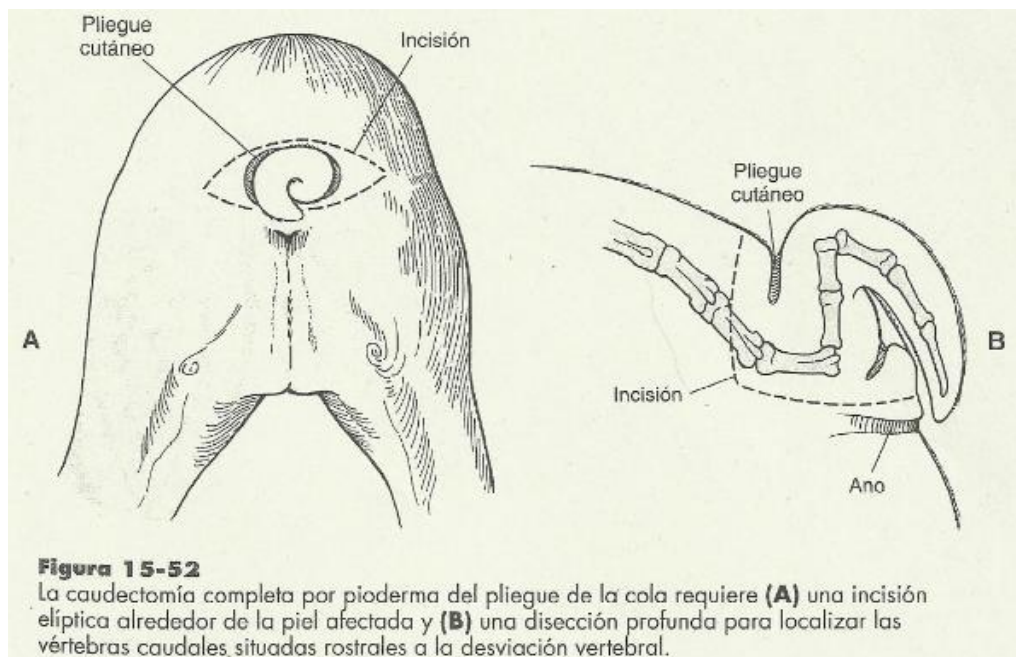


**Procedimiento Caudectomía completa:**

Anestesiarse al paciente; rasurar y preparar asépticamente todo el perineo y el área de la base de la cola. Colocar al animal en decúbito ventral. Hacer una incisión elíptica alrededor de la base de la cola (figura A). Incidir el tejido subcutáneo para exponer los músculos. Separar las uniones de los músculos elevadores del ano, rectococcígeo y coccígeo con las vértebras caudales (figura B). Ligar las arterias y venas caudales laterales y mediales antes o después de la transección. Transaccionar la cola desarticulándola con una cuchilla de bisturí por la segunda o tercera vértebra caudal. Lavar el área después de establecer hemostasia. Aproximas los músculos elevadores del ano y el tejido subcutáneo mediante una sutura simple continua o discontinua (el material de las suturas bien puede ser polidioxanona como poliglecaprona 25,



glucómero 631 o poligluconato de 3-0 o 4-0). Como alternativa se puede conservar el pliegue de piel de la cola, sin embargo, puede persistir la pioderma.



### 3.2 OTECTOMÍA

El corte de orejas se lleva a cabo con el fin de buscar un modelo estético que se considera necesario para mejorar el aspecto del animal. A pesar que la otoplastia estética se practica en perros mayores de un año, las probabilidades de éxito aumentan considerablemente si se interviene quirúrgicamente al animal en una edad más temprana. A mayor tamaño de la raza canina más joven se debe hacer la intervención. El perro grande, de desarrollo rápido, puede sufrir a la edad de dos meses una ruptura aguda del cartílago de la oreja en su proximidad con la cabeza. Esta rotura en muy pocas ocasiones es corregible con un corte estándar, y puede ser necesario el empleo de procedimientos que impidan la posterior exhibición del ejemplar en concursos.

A continuación en la tabla 2, se enumeran las razas a las que se acostumbra a cortarles las orejas, las edades a las que debe hacerse el corte y el largo máximo de la oreja después de cortarla.

**TABLA 2:****PERROS MÁS FRECUENTES CON CORTE DE OREJAS**

<b>RAZA</b>	<b>EDAD</b>	<b>TAMAÑO</b>
Schnauzer miniatura	10 – 12 semanas	2 ¼ pulgadas
Bóxer	9 – 10 semanas	2 ½ pulgadas
Schnauzer gigante	9 – 10 semanas	2 ½ pulgadas
Doberman pinscher	7 – 8 semanas	2 ¾ pulgadas
Gran Danés	7 semanas	3 ½ pulgadas
Boston terrier	Cualquier edad	Tan largas como sea posible

El largo a las edades dadas se determina de acuerdo a los estándares generales de cada raza, pero dependen en cierto modo del sexo y de la estructura básica del ejemplar. Debe medirse desde la coyuntura de la superficie dorsal media del colgajo de la oreja y la cabeza.

Un bóxer cuyas orejas se cortan a las diez semanas de edad tendrá una oreja de aproximadamente dos pulgadas y media de largo. Si el cachorro es excepcionalmente grande para su edad, el cirujano debe tener en cuenta el margen del crecimiento futuro y aumentar hasta un octavo de pulgada. Por esta misma razón, las orejas de los machos deben cortarse un poco más largas que las de las hembras. Debe descartarse la tendencia a reducir la talla de las orejas con el fin de que las orejas permanezcan erectas más fácilmente, ya que no existe nada más feo que la apariencia de un bóxer muy grande con las orejas muy pequeñas. En ciertas razas, la oreja se corta muy pequeña, así el “American pit bull” es uno de los pocos animales cuyas orejas se deben cortar muy pequeñas para hacerlas lo más inaccesibles posible.

Es muy importante la forma de la oreja. Un ejemplar con estructura ósea fina y características femeninas debe tener orejas delgadas. A un macho, especialmente si su conformación ósea es tosca, deberá dársele una oreja ancha con “campana” bastante

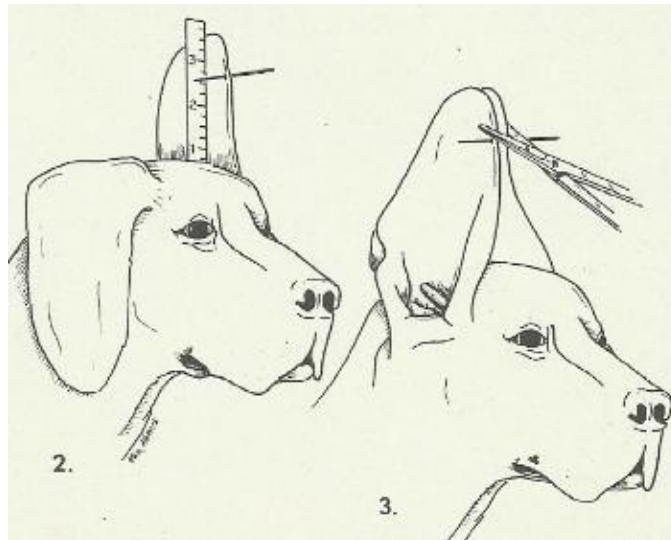
grande. La campana es la porción de la oreja que da vuelta en la región más próxima a la cabeza al recortar la oreja desde su punto más distal hasta el más próximo.

Para realizar este corte de orejas estético, se ha de anestesiar al animal previamente. El empleo de anestesia por inhalación ha aumentado un porcentaje considerable la seguridad en las intervenciones quirúrgicas en cachorros muy pequeños puesto que, un cachorro de siete semanas de edad tiene muy poca resistencia o defensas para desintoxicar y eliminar el pentobarbital sódico. Se puede realizar en cachorros anestesia por inducción con barbitúricos de corta acción intubando posteriormente y adaptando el tubo a un aparato inhalador de oxígeno y anestésico. Se puede administrar también atropina en el periodo preoperatorio. No se recomienda el empleo de Demerol para controlar la presión sanguínea y el sangrado durante la otoplastia estética. Tampoco se recomienda la inyección de epinefrina para bloquear la línea de corte, debido a los efectos sistémicos que este produce.

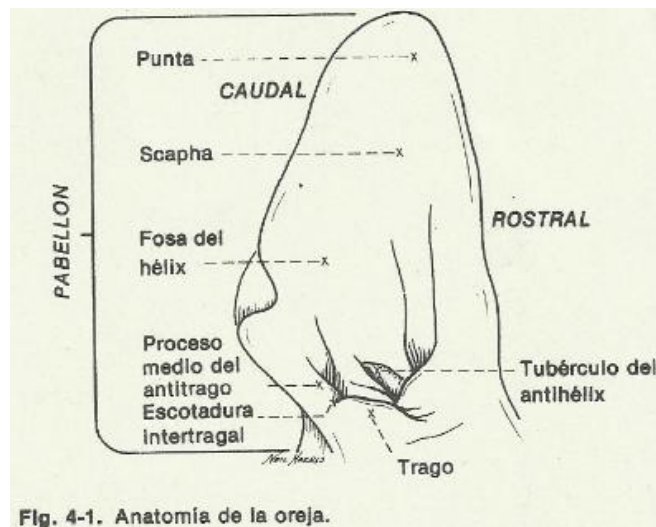
***Procedimiento:***

Se rasura el pelo de las orejas y se frota éstas con una solución de povidona yodada. Se coloca al perro en decúbito ventral con el cuello y el mentón apoyados en una toalla con el propósito de elevar la cabeza. La mesa y el animal, con excepción de la cabeza, se cubren con campos quirúrgicos estériles. El dejar la cabeza descubierta se debe a que así se tiene mejor visibilidad del campo quirúrgico durante la intervención, de manera que la conformación de las orejas puede ser realizada de acuerdo a la forma de las mismas. Las orejas se levantan y se extienden por encima de la cabeza del animal en toda su extensión; el tamaño de la oreja se obtiene midiéndolas desde el punto en que la piel se dobla en el pabellón o cartílago hacia la cabeza y hasta alcanzar un punto en el borde rostral del cartílago (Figura 2). La longitud se marca en una oreja colocando una aduja pequeña a través del borde rostral de la piel del cartílago. Las orejas se comparan posteriormente con el fin de igualarlas. Es bastante común que al unir las orejas el cirujano vea que una de ellas quedó mal marcada. Es por esto por lo que se insiste en que se comparen ambas orejas, ya que esta práctica elimina los errores. Las puntas de ambas orejas se unen y se atraviesan juntas con una aguja, realizando un pequeño corte; pero fácilmente reconocible durante la intervención entre el extremo

de la oreja y la aguja sobre el borde rostral de los cartílagos. La incisión se realiza con tijeras (Figura 3).

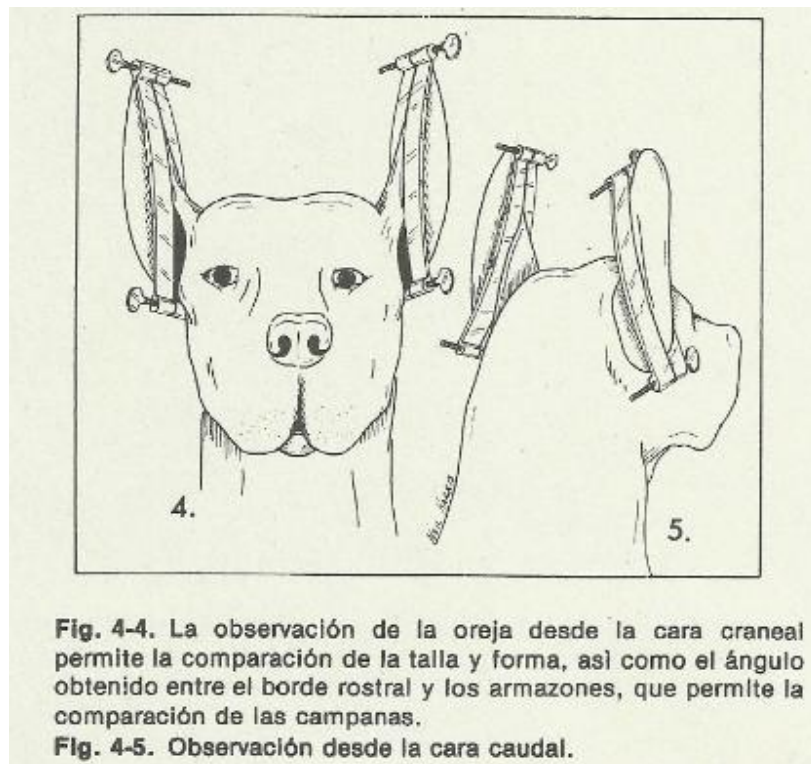


Posteriormente se fija en cada una de las orejas una armazón curva especial desde la incisión hasta el corte intertrayectual y lo más cerca posible de la prominencia de la oreja (Figura 4.1).

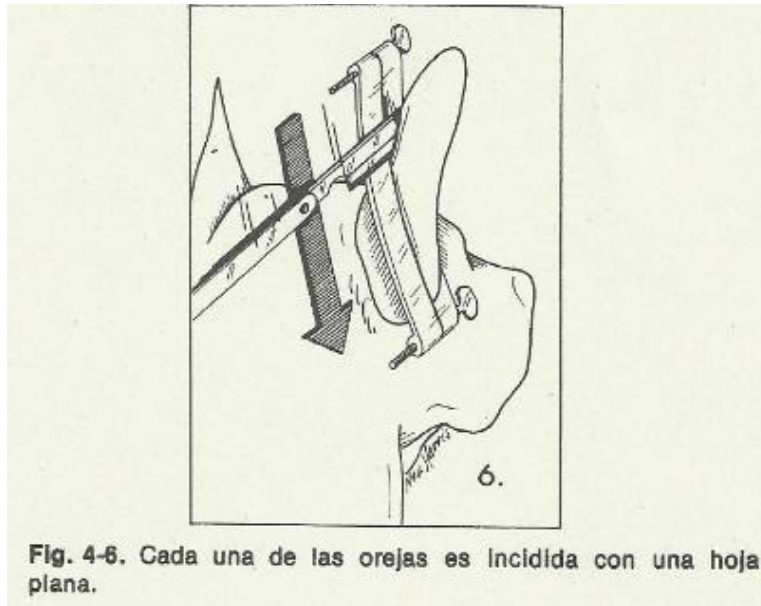


Cada armazón deberá colocarse en su lugar con su lado convexo volteado hacia la superficie rostral de la oreja. Una vez que ambos están en su lugar, se pueden estirar y manipular las orejas hasta conseguir la forma deseada. Si se estiran distalmente, se obtendrán orejas delgadas. Tirando un poco más del borde caudal de las orejas, de modo que pase entre las armazones y que dentro de ellas quede menos cartílago, también se logran orejas delgadas, mientras que maniobrando en sentido contrario

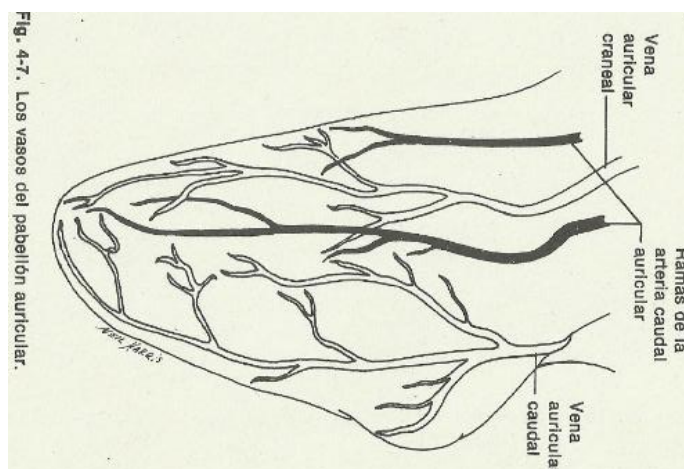
quedarán más anchas. Se logran campanas anchas aplicando tensión distalmente combinada con una tensión mínima en dirección caudal hacia la región de la “fosa del hélix”. Después de manipular las orejas, fijarlas y asegurarlas en el armazón, se comparan observándolas tanto craneal como caudalmente (Figuras 4.4 y 4.5). Durante esta comparación debe ponerse especial atención al ángulo formado por el borde rostral de cada oreja con armazón, a la cantidad de reja que hay que cortar y a la amplitud de campana.



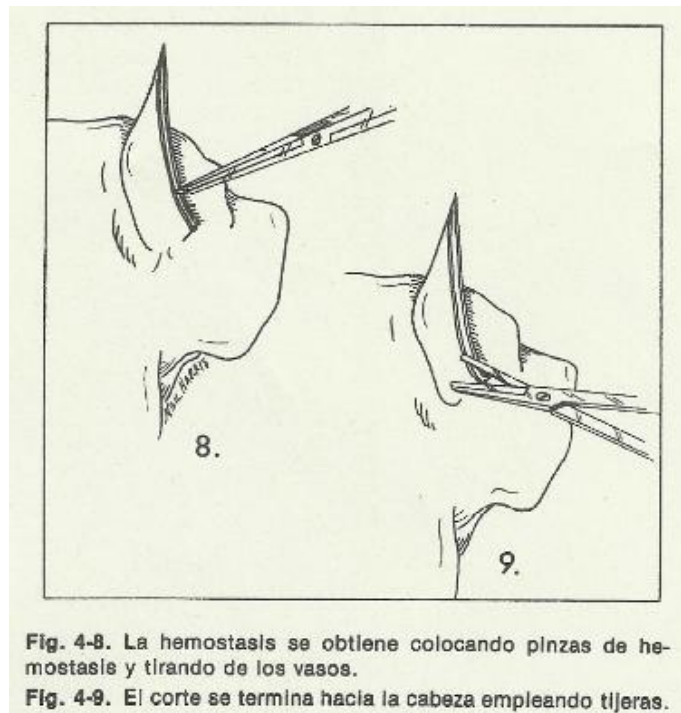
Cuando el cirujano queda satisfecho de la igualdad bilateral de las orejas y de que la forma dada quirúrgicamente es compatible con la forma de la cabeza, la raza y el sexo del animal, se procede a cortar la porción lateral de cada pabellón auricular que quedó fuera de la armazón, con una hoja de bisturí plana y nueva (Figura 4.6). Puede aplicarse una navaja de afeitar de doble filo o una navaja Weck, ya que el bisturí de hija fina no es lo suficientemente filoso y su estructura no es apropiada para este tipo de incisión. Se comienza a cortar aserrando ligeramente en el corte que se hizo previamente y se continua de un solo tajo limpiamente ejecutado hasta la porción ventral de la oreja y del armazón, obteniendo así un corte limpio y tenso.



Después de realizar el corte se retiran las armazones y la hemorragia se controla con pinzas de hemostasia de mosquito. En esta intervención se seccionan tres vasos importantes de la oreja situados en la superficie lateral. El vaso distal pertenece a la vena auricular craneal (Figura 4.7), y generalmente sangra muy poco. Otro vaso caudal auricular similar al anterior se encuentra en la incisión ventral; probablemente su sangrado vaya a requerir la aplicación de pinzas. El vaso sanguíneo que sangra más es una rama de la arteria caudal auricular que generalmente se encuentra a 2/3 de distancia en sentido distal de la línea de incisión. Se facilita el control de este vaso haciendo un dobléz en la porción medial de la piel (Figura 4.8).



Cuando se obtiene hemostasis, las tijeras se emplean para completar la incisión de la hendidura intertragal con el cartílago incluido, con el fin de lograr simetría en la porción ventral de la incisión. Dado el volumen de la armazón, la incisión no permitirá dar la vuelta adecuadamente hacia el lado de la cabeza en la región del trago. Debido a esto se emplean tijeras para emparejar a cada lado la incisión ventral de la cabeza (Figura 4.9).



La sutura se realiza con material no absorbible empleando un patrón de sutura simple continuo. Es muy importante escoger un material que no produzca reacción. Ha de utilizarse una aguja recta. La sutura se inicia en un punto situado a 3/8 de pulgada de la punta de la oreja. Si se comienza a suturar más cerca, se corre el riesgo de un desdoblamiento ventral de la punta o de necrosis del cartílago distal a la sutura. La sutura se continúa hacia la cabeza metiendo y sacando la aguja de la piel de la superficie craneal del cartílago, pasando el cartílago y atravesando la piel de la superficie caudal del cartílago (Figura 4.10). Debe hacerse todo lo posible por lograr que la piel quede igual a cada lado del cartílago. Se debe tener especial cuidado en evitar que la piel forme dobleces en la superficie caudal de la oreja y también han que evitar la ventroflexión de la misma; ambas cosas pueden resultar de exceso de tensión en la línea de sutura.



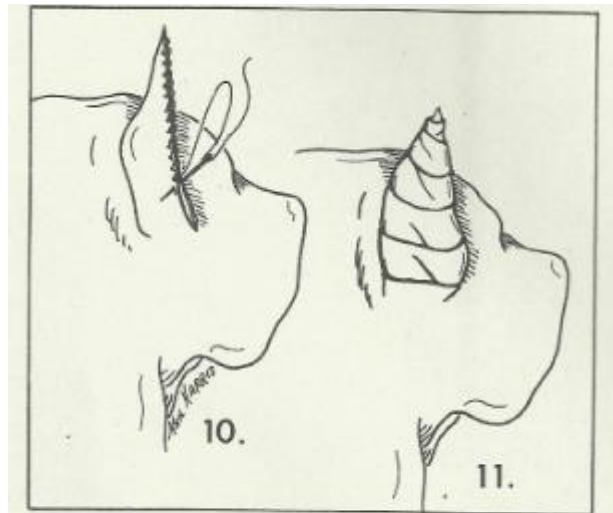


Fig. 4-10. Una sutura simple continua se realiza en cada oreja.  
 Fig. 4-11. Se aplica alrededor de la oreja un vendaje con cinta adhesiva y se envuelve en un cono de algodón la oreja si no ha comenzado a levantarse 7 días después de la intervención.

### ***Cuidado postoperatorio***

A la mayoría de los pacientes a quienes se les practica la otectomía estética no se les aplica vendaje. Se hace la antisepsia de rutina y se deja que el animal vuelva de la anestesia por sí mismo. Cuando se juzga que se recuperó del choque anestésico, se le da el alta. Las únicas razas que requieren vendaje son el Gran Danés y el Doberman Pinscher, este último en los casos en que la oreja tiende a caer bruscamente después de que se le ha amputado parcialmente el pabellón auricular. Cuando esto ocurre, debe aplicarse alrededor de la base de la oreja una banda de tela adhesiva para ayudar a que se levante rápido. En ningún caso debe cubrirse totalmente la oreja antes de retirar los puntos de sutura, lo que generalmente puede hacerse siete días después de la intervención.

Una vez retirados los puntos, se calculan las probabilidades de que ambas orejas permanezcan erectas. Si el corte las hizo subir desde la cabeza en una suave curva, no hay necesidad de aplicar vendaje. Pero si se observa que caen abruptamente y que el cartílago del pabellón adopta un ángulo agudo, debe aplicarse un cono de algodón en el canal de la oreja y envolverlo circularmente con tela adhesiva desde la punta hasta la base. Este vendaje debe permanecer cinco días y retirarse durante otros cinco días. Se continúa vendando y desvendando en esta forma hasta que las orejas queden erectas (Figura 4.11).



## **4. Pros y contras de otectomías y caudectomías**

### **CAUDECTOMÍA**

La amputación de la cola en los animales domésticos ha sido desde hace muchos años un tema muy discutido y criticado en los distintos países. Ha sido y es una práctica muy extendida en todo el mundo, hasta el punto de que un tercio de las razas puras reconocidas tienen la cola cortada en su estándar racial. Cada país ha tomado su propia decisión acerca de prohibir o no esta práctica aunque es cierto que algunos países solo la permiten si ésta es llevada a cabo por un veterinario. También es cierto que en muchos países donde es totalmente legal, muchos veterinarios se niegan a practicarla o algunos la practican únicamente por miedo a que, si no lo hacen ellos, lo hagan los propios creadores. En definitiva, es un tema muy complejo que incluye consideraciones económicas, estéticas, de bienestar animal y morales.

#### **4.1. ARGUMENTOS EN CONTRA:**

Cuando estamos hablando de otectomías o caudectomías estéticas estamos hablando de un procedimiento que no está indicado médicamente. Estas cirugías no van a proporcionar ningún beneficio al paciente ya que los perros no necesitan subir su autoestima mejorando su aspecto físico. El único beneficio lo puede llegar a obtener el propietario viendo mejorada la imagen de su mascota. Este aspecto no consideramos que sea suficiente para llevar a cabo un procedimiento quirúrgico.

##### **1. Dolor**

La gente que se opone al corte de colas lo hace sobre la base de que los cachorros sufren un dolor agudo cuando se les lleva a cabo este procedimiento. La gente que está a favor, se justifica diciendo que los perros son demasiado jóvenes cuando se les practica y tienen el sistema nervioso todavía inmaduro, de manera que no pueden sentir dolor o sienten un dolor muy leve. Se hizo un estudio en Australia en el año 1996 en el que se preguntaba a los veterinarios y a los criadores si creían que los animales tenían dolor cuando se les cortaba la cola. El resultado fue muy distinto entre los dos sectores, el 76% de los veterinarios creían que los perros padecen mucho dolor

mientras que el 82% de los criadores pensaban que no tienen dolor o tienen muy poco dolor.

El **dolor** es un fenómeno totalmente subjetivo que no puede ser identificado ni cuantificado mediante las tecnologías de que disponemos actualmente. Esto hace que tengamos que deducirlo a través de medidas indirectas y que sea un aspecto muy discutido entre filósofos y científicos sobretodo cuando hablamos del dolor en poblaciones que no son capaces de hablar. En los humanos, el dolor se identifica y se cuantifica simplemente haciendo preguntas como: siente dolor? Dónde? Podría clasificármelo en una escala del 1 al 10? En veterinaria se ha tenido que desarrollar otros sistemas que se basan en **índices del comportamiento** ante el dolor. Se valora el tiempo que es capaz de aguantar el animal en contacto con un estímulo doloroso, las vocalizaciones y también se valoran indicadores fisiológicos como el incremento de cortisol o corticosterona en plasma y el incremento del pulso. Sin embargo, la evidencia dice que las especies difieren en la manera de reaccionar ante el dolor y en el umbral del dolor de manera que los índices son limitados y nunca podremos saber a ciencia cierta si los animales sienten el dolor como lo hacemos nosotros. Además de todos estos impedimentos, todavía es más difícil determinar el dolor cuando hablamos de animales que no tienen ni una semana de vida. Estos animales son físicamente incapaces de mostrar un comportamiento asociado al dolor ni tampoco nos permiten obtener muestras de sangre o saliva en suficientes cantidades como para medir las hormonas del estrés. A falta de pruebas aceptables, lo que se acaba haciendo es una hipótesis que dice que estos individuos sienten dolor cuando se someten a situaciones que a nosotros nos causarían dolor.

Aunque existen **pocos estudios en perros** debido a su dificultad en la interpretación y elaboración, si se han llevado a cabo en otras especies como las ovejas, los cerdos y los terneros. Estos estudios se han intentado extrapolar al perro aunque existen ciertas diferencias. En los estudios de cortes de cola en el ganado se apreciaron cambios comportamentales y/o fisiológicos que se relacionaron con la existencia de un dolor agudo. Sin embargo, cabe la posibilidad de que el dolor en el ganado sea debido a la técnica utilizada, en este caso una banda de goma, diferente a la cirugía que se realiza en perros. También hay otro aspecto diferente, y éste es la edad. El corte de cola en las

ovejas suele realizarse más tarde que en perros. Al ser las ovejas de mayor edad, podría ser que los procesos perceptivos y sensoriales estén más desarrollados que en un animal que apenas tiene 5 días. Para salir de dudas se hicieron cortes de cola en ovejas a esa misma edad y se vio que sufrían incluso más dolor que cuando eran adultas. La única diferencia con los perros es que éstos son **especies altriciales** de manera que podrían tener un sistema nervioso inmaduro y no sentir el dolor. No obstante, pruebas en otras especies mamíferas, como las ratas, han establecido que la inmadurez no tiene porque implicar una insensibilidad al dolor.

Como se ha dicho anteriormente las **vocalizaciones** se utilizan como un indicador del dolor. Basándonos en este indicador, existen evidencias de que la amputación de la cola es un procedimiento doloroso para los cachorros ya que en un estudio en el que se grabaron las respuestas de 50 cachorros al procedimiento, se observó que todos los cachorros sufrían y reproducían sonidos intensos y repetidos durante la amputación. También reproducían sonidos intensos mientras se les suturaba la incisión. El hecho de que todos los cachorros emitieran sonidos hace que el dolor sea muy probable.

## 2. Dolor crónico

Uno de los argumentos más fuertes en contra de la amputación de la cola es el hecho de que puede ser asociado a la presencia de neuromas y dolor crónico, o a un incremento en la sensibilidad del dolor en algunos perros. Sin embargo, esto no ha sido demostrado empíricamente. Aunque los perros sean capaces de enmascarar el dolor crónico se espera que éste afecte a su comportamiento.

## 3. Problemas de salud crónicos

Otro de los argumentos en contra del corte de colas es que se ha descrito atrofia y degeneración de la cola en algunos pacientes así como de los músculos pélvicos. Esta atrofia puede conducir a una incontinencia fecal y un compromiso de la integridad del diafragma pélvico pudiéndose producir una hernia perineal. También se han descrito casos de incontinencia urinaria

#### 4. Problemas en la locomoción

Algunos autores argumentan que la cola es un elemento importante para los perros en relación con el equilibrio y la agilidad. Dado que la mayoría de especies animales que tienen estilos de vida en los que se requiere velocidad y agilidad tienen cola, se puede llegar a pensar que esto es una ventaja evolutiva para ellos. Desafortunadamente no hay estudios científicos publicados que comparen la locomoción entre perros con la cola y sin ella.

#### 5. Problemas en la comunicación

Los perros utilizan la cola para comunicarse socialmente entre ellos de manera que un perro que no disponga de ella, puede tener desventajas sociales. Se dice que los perros que tienen la cola amputada tienen comportamientos compensatorios como puede ser el movimiento del tercio posterior. Además, cabe la posibilidad de la existencia de mal entendidos entre animales de la misma raza, sin embargo no hay estudios que lo demuestren. La comunicación con los humanos también puede verse afectada, ya que por ejemplo, los niños pueden tener miedo a perros sin cola debido a que asocian el movimiento de ésta a que está contento.

#### 6. Infecciones y problemas en la cicatrización

Al igual que con cualquier procedimiento quirúrgico, existe la posibilidad de complicaciones como sangrado excesivo, infección y necrosis. La herida puede infectarse después de la cirugía, sobretodo si las condiciones higiénicas y de esterilidad no son las correctas. Además también puede haber problemas en la cicatrización, la herida puede abrirse continuamente sobretodo si cachorro está en compañía de los demás cachorros de la camada.

### **4.2 ARGUMENTOS A FAVOR:**

La evidencia de la existencia de dolor impone una carga importante sobre las personas que defienden ésta practica ya que, tienen que ser capaces de mostrar beneficios que superen los costes.

## 1. Mantener la tradición

La amputación de la cola es una costumbre que se estableció hace ya más de 2000 años para satisfacer diversos motivos. Estos motivos incluían principalmente razones funcionales como prevenir que los animales de caza se dañaran la cola o prevenir enfermedades como la rabia. También incluían razones económicas, ya que en algunos casos se imponía un impuesto de “perros de lujo” a aquellos perros que tenían la cola larga.

Algunos argumentan que a las razas que tradicionalmente se les cortaba la cola deben permanecer con la cola cortada simplemente para preservar la tradición y conservar el aspecto característico de la raza. De hecho, muchas personas afirman que cortan a la cola a su perro con el fin de cumplir con el estándar oficial de la raza en cuestión. La verdad es que este argumento sobre la tradición parece un argumento muy poco convincente éticamente.

A los perros tradicionalmente no se les amputaba la cola mucho antes de que se les amputara por esta razón, cualquier argumento en términos puramente tradicionales a favor de la amputación tiene muy poco valor, ya que únicamente se limita a nuestra propia historia cultural.

Es importante que traslademos las razones por las que tradicionalmente se cortaba la cola a los perros a nuestro clima social actual. En esa época la sociedad veía a los animales puramente como una posesión. No había ninguna protección legal ni moral que los defendiera de manera que sus dueños podían hacer lo que quisieran con ellos. El perro se veía como una máquina incapaz de sentir dolor o emociones. Muchos estándares raciales fueron redactados originalmente en un momento en el que había muy poco conocimiento de la fisiología y en el que el bienestar animal era de poco interés. Los estándares raciales, al igual que todas las leyes pueden cambiar y cambian, como evolucionan las culturas y el conocimiento.

## 2. Prevención

Dentro de la prevención podemos diferenciar:

### **Prevención de daños y perros de trabajo**

Los defensores de la amputación de la cola suelen citar muchos beneficios prácticos que se cree que están asociados con el procedimiento, aunque estos supuestos beneficios rara vez, han sido demostrado científicamente. Una de las afirmaciones más comunes es que algunas razas a las que tradicionalmente se les amputa la cola tienden a involucrarse en actividades en las que es probable que se dañen la cola como pueden ser los perros de caza. Se argumenta que el procedimiento es necesario, por lo tanto, para evitar el dolor y la incomodidad asociada con el daño. Esta lógica de amputar la cola claramente no aprueba la práctica generalizada que existe hoy en día, que incluye muchas razas de perros a los que se les amputaba la cola tradicionalmente por razones distintas a la prevención de lesiones.

También está el caso de los perros guardianes de los que, se dice que podrían ser agarrados por la cola para evitar su ataque de manera que se impediría su función. O los perros de trabajo de pelo largo, en los que la cola larga y colgante puede llegar a ser una fuente de suciedad.

la falta de estudios apropiados en esta área representa una dificultad importante para los que apoyan la amputación de la cola, incluso en aquellas razas en las que puede esperarse que se dañen la cola. De hecho, la eliminación de las colas de todos los miembros de una raza sólo porque algunos pueden llegar a sufrir daños en la cola cuando sean adultos no parece estar justificada.

### **Prevención de la acumulación de material fecal**

Otro beneficio podría ser que en algunas razas puede reducir la acumulación de materia fecal alrededor de la zona de la cola en sobretodo en perros con capas excesivas. Tal acumulación podría producir una irritación significativa sobretodo por la atracción de las moscas y la posible infestación por gusanos. Además, también hay que valorar los inconvenientes que esto supone para el dueño del perro. Sin embargo, una vez más, hay pocas evidencias que apoyen esta afirmación. Es muy difícil justificar la eliminación de la cola de un perro con fines higiénicos. Sobretodo porque podrían llevarse a cabo otros métodos como el rasurado del pelo de la cola o el arreglo de éste así como cambios en la dieta.

### 3. Mantener la calidad de la raza

Otro argumento que se presenta para apoyar la continuación del corte de cola en algunas razas hace referencia al mantenimiento de la calidad de la raza. La prohibición del corte de la cola puede comprometer esto de varias maneras. En primer lugar, en las razas de perros que han sido sometidas a la amputación de la cola durante muchos años, no se han tenido en cuenta características como la inserción de la cola o la longitud. Dicen que podría esperarse una amplia variedad de apariencias si se dejara de cortar la cola. Además, argumentan que los criadores pueden sentirse obligados a seleccionar las características de la cola dejando de lado otras características importantes como el temperamento o la estructura.

La selección de los rasgos que se han considerado deseables ya ha dado lugar a enormes dificultades en algunas razas. Por ejemplo, la selección de la cabeza grande, ha creado razas con partos distócicos sistemáticos así como la selección de las caras braquicefálicas ha llevado a razas que no pueden controlar la pérdida de calor eficazmente. En algunas razas en las que se ha pretendido seleccionar colas más cortas para imitar la apariencia de las colas amputadas, se ha observado que se producía una mayor incidencia de espina bífida y otros defectos en la médula espinal.

### 4. Mejora de la calidad de vida de los perros individuales

En algunas razas en las que se corta la cola tradicionalmente, algunas de las crías ya nacen con la cola más corta de lo normal. Muchas veces estos animales son animales con colas deformadas, dobladas, torcidas o simplemente mal colocadas. Los criadores defienden que si no realizan una caudectomía a estos animales tienen problemas a la hora de encontrarles un hogar.

### 5. Preferencias personales

Un último argumento en defensa del corte de cola hace referencia al hecho de que algunas personas simplemente prefieren perros con la cola cortada. Para algunos, esto puede ser una cuestión de conveniencia, donde los animales con la cola cortada pueden ser menos propensos a golpear objetos valiosos de la casa así como a

ensuciarla. Aunque, es más común que los dueños de los perros y los criadores reclamen la caudectomía simplemente porque les agrada más estéticamente.

## **OTECTOMÍA**

El corte de las orejas se lleva a cabo en algunas razas para modificar la forma de éstas y que queden de manera natural en posición vertical. El recorte suele llevarse a cabo entre las 6 y las 12 semanas de edad dependiendo de la raza y la condición corporal. En las razas más grandes, después de la cirugía se coloca una cinta adhesiva, vendajes u otros dispositivos para asegurarse de que las orejas quedaran en posición vertical.

### **4.3 ARGUMENTOS EN CONTRA:**

#### **1. Anestesia general**

El corte de las orejas siempre debe llevarse a cabo bajo anestesia general. La anestesia general siempre tiene sus riesgos debido a la depresión del sistema cardio-respiratorio en cualquier paciente. Además, el hecho de anestesiarse al animal provoca un estrés importante en éste, que puede afectar al sistema inmunitario predisponiendo al animal a infecciones u otras enfermedades. No hay que olvidar que estamos sometiendo a un animal a una operación quirúrgica muchas veces con fines estética, que no está indicada médicamente, es aquí donde entra en juego nuestra ética y nuestra moral.

#### **2. Cuidado post-operatorio**

Los perros pueden sentir molestias durante el proceso de curación y cicatrización. Además los vendajes y las curas después de la cirugía también les resultan molestas. En algunos casos es necesario mantener el vendaje o la cinta durante días o meses de manera que puede ser una incomodidad muy importante para el animal. También será necesario controlar las hemorragias para evitar la formación de otohemitomas. Si se produce un otohemitoma es fácil que la oreja se fibrose y se retraiga de manera que no consigamos que quede erecta.

#### **3. Infecciones**



Como en cualquier post-quirúrgico las incisiones pueden ser el origen de infecciones. Será sencillo que éstas, por proximidad, alcancen el oído.

Por último, es necesario avisar al propietario que no siempre las orejas quedan erectas sino que en algunas ocasiones cae, de manera que requieren cirugías posteriores.

#### 4. Persona que efectúa la operación

Muchos veterinarios coinciden en que cuando realizan esta práctica no se sienten orgullosos de llevarla a cabo pero la realizan por miedo a que, si ellos no lo hacen, lo harán otras personas en peores condiciones para el animal. Esta afirmación no es un disparate ya que se sabe que muchos criadores realizan ellos mismos la otectomía por ahorrarse dinero, porque no confían en el criterio del veterinario o porque, simplemente el veterinario se niega a llevarla a cabo por razones éticas. Solo un veterinario puede hacer una otectomía en condiciones de esterilidad, con un buen plan anestésicos y analgésico. Además, solo el veterinario puede controlar al animal en el post-operatorio ya que en los criaderos los animales vuelven a juntarse con la madre y con los hermanos y es prácticamente imposible dedicarles el tiempo que merecen.

#### **4.4 ARGUMENTOS A FAVOR:**

##### 1. Prevención de otitis

Se ha sugerido que los perros con las orejas cortadas son menos propensos a sufrir infecciones del canal auricular. Aunque el desarrollo de algunas infecciones graves se ha relacionado con la presencia de una oreja caída, no hay evidencia de que el hecho de recortar las orejas sirva como método de prevención.

La otitis externa es una infección del canal auditivo que en la mayoría de los casos se resuelve con tratamiento médico. En un pequeño número de casos la otitis puede hacerse crónica, requiriendo tratamiento quirúrgico, y en pocas ocasiones desfigurando el pabellón auricular. Los informes de varios estudios indican que cuando los perros de raza se agrupan según si poseen orejas caídas o erectas, hay una mayor incidencia de otitis externa en el grupo con orejas caídas. Se ha sugerido que una oreja caída puede acumular más humedad y por lo tanto puede promover el desarrollo de la infección procedente de un trastorno de la piel o irritante.

Si analizamos más a fondo este tema, y nos centramos en una raza como es el Cocker Spaniel, vemos que esta raza parece estar predispuesta a padecer otitis externa debido a que dispone de una mayor densidad de glándulas apocrinas y una predisposición a la hiperplasia ceruminosa proliferativa y a la ectasia (dilatación o distensión) de éstas. Esta afirmación sugiere que el riesgo de otitis externa en perros debe considerarse de manera independiente en cada raza y que no podemos afirmar directamente que los perros con las orejas caídas tienen una mayor predisposición a padecer otitis.

Para demostrar que las orejas caídas son un factor de riesgo significativo (en general y por raza), y que este riesgo se reduce significativamente o se elimina con el corte de orejas, tendría que realizarse un estudio científico que comparara la incidencia de otitis en perros con las orejas cortadas y perros sin las orejas cortadas dentro de una misma raza.

## 2. Aspecto agresivo en perros de seguridad

El corte de orejas produce una expresión de atención y peligrosidad en perros utilizados para labores de seguridad o guardia y puede contribuir a la apariencia característica de una raza pedigrí. Además proporciona cierto aspecto de peligrosidad que también puede ayudar en casos de perros guardianes.

## 3. Mejora de la audición

Otro argumento muy comentado es que se cree que el hecho de tener las orejas erectas ayuda a mejorar la audición. La oreja caída puede considerarse una especie de pared delante del canal auditivo que impida en cierta medida la entrada del sonido. Sin embargo, no hay ningún estudio científico que demuestre esto. Antiguamente los cazadores pensaban que los perros con orejas caídas eran más útiles para la caza ya que tenían más reducido el sentido del oído y no se distraían con sonidos o ruidos que no correspondían con las piezas de caza buscadas sino que, dedicaban más atención al olfato. No sabemos si esta afirmación es cierta pero si es verdad que hoy en día existe una correlación entre la longitud de las orejas y las razas que se utilizan para la caza.

#### 4. Prevención de lesiones

También se ha sugerido que el recorte de orejas puede prevenir lesiones en éstas, reducir el riesgo de desgarros del pabellón auricular o de otohematomas por mordiscos, enganches en vallas, matorrales, etc. Algunos dicen que en perros de guardia se podría utilizar como medida preventiva ya que el pabellón auricular puede ser un punto débil en estos animales (zona muy sangrante, fácil de agarrar, etc.) pero tampoco disponemos de pruebas para corroborar estas afirmaciones. Además, el hecho de tener las orejas largas, muchas veces puede ir relacionado con la formación de auto-otohematomas. Los animales cuando presentan otitis externas se sacuden violentamente la cabeza autolesionándose.

#### 5. Diferenciación de razas

Otra de las razones que consideraron muchos criadores es la diferenciación de razas. Dicen que hay razas que son muy parecidas entre ellas y el corte de orejas facilita su diferenciación. Un ejemplo es el Dobermann azul y el Weimaraner.

#### 6. Conducta natural y comunicación del perro

Se dice que el hecho de que los caninos silvestres tengan una gran movilidad en las orejas puede ser una importante ventaja evolutiva en la especie. No solo les sirven para conocer la dirección del sonido sino que además es su principal medio de comunicación. La postura de las orejas en los perros es una de las formas más visibles de comunicación entre animales de la misma especie. En los perros con las orejas caídas el movimiento y la comunicación quedan muy reducidos.

## 5. Legislación

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### 5.1 ÁMBITO EUROPEO

Dentro del marco legal en la Unión Europea no existe una legislación comunitaria que permita o prohíba la práctica de la caudectomía y la otectomía en animales domésticos. Sin embargo, sí que existe un convenio entre diferentes países miembros de la Unión Europea que hace referencia a la Protección de los Animales de Compañía. Dicho documento fue realizado en Octubre de 1987 en Estrasburgo y en el cual en el artículo 10 se incluye la prohibición de realizar operaciones quirúrgicas por mera estética.

#### **...[Article 10 – Surgical operations**

- 1 *Surgical operations for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a pet animal or for other non-curative purposes shall be prohibited and, in particular:*
  - a *the docking of tails;*
  - b *the cropping of ears;*
  - c *devocalisation;*
  - d *declawing and defanging;*
- 2 *Exceptions to these prohibitions shall be permitted only:*
  - a *if a veterinarian considers non-curative procedures necessary either for veterinary medical reasons or for the benefit of any particular animal;*
  - b *to prevent reproduction.*
- 3
  - a *Operations in which the animal will or is likely to experience severe pain shall be carried out under anaesthesia only by a veterinarian or under his supervision.*
  - b *Operations for which no anaesthesia is required may be carried out by a person competent under national legislation.]...*

Este convenio cada país es libre de firmarlo y además en el momento de la firma puede acogerse a abstenerse a cumplir totalmente el artículo 6 y el artículo 10, párrafo 1, inciso a. Por ello encontramos diferentes situaciones de cumplimiento respecto a cada país.

Los países que han aceptado y ratificado íntegramente el convenio són:

- Austria
- Chipre
- Grecia
- Lituania
- Suécia
- Bulgaria
- Rumanía
- Suiza: Además perros con amputación de cola está prohibido exhibirlos y también está prohibido exportar animales para prevenir cualquier intención de practicarles una caudectomía (*Ordinance on Animal Protection, 27 May 1981; Ordinance on the Importation, Transit and Export of Animals and Livestock Products, 20 April 1988*).

Países que han firmado pero no han ratificado el Convenio:

- Italia Se continua permitiendo el corte de colas
- Holanda. La caudectomía está prohibida

Países que han firmado el Convenio pero con alguna abstención:

- Bélgica: En el 2006 se acabó prohibiendo el corte de colas. (*Arrêté Royal [Royal Decree] of the 17 May 2001; Law of the 18 October 1991*).
- República Checa: Se continúan cortando colas acorde con la Unión Canina Checa (CMKU) que está afiliada a la Organización Canina Mundial (FCI)
- Dinamarca: La caudectomía está prohibida y los perros nacidos después del 1 de Enero de 1996 a los cuales se les haya practicado esta cirugía no pueden exhibirse. Sin embargo si que está permitido en las siguientes razas, aunque actualmente se está discutiendo la abolición de estas excepciones:
  - o Weimaraner

- Brittany spaniel
  - German shorthaired pointer
  - Wirehaired pointer
  - Vizsla
- Finlandia. El corte de colas se acabó prohibiendo en 1996 y hasta la fecha los perros nacidos en Finlandia con la cola cortada no se pueden exhibir.
  - Francia. Se continúa permitiendo el corte de colas
  - Alemania. El corte de colas se acabó prohibiendo en 2006. Aún así se permite esta práctica por razones médicas y en varias razas de perros de caza, los cuales tienen que pasar un test previo.
  - Luxemburgo
  - Portugal: Las amputaciones estéticas solo están permitidas si están realizadas por un veterinario y justificadas por una razón médica

Países que no han firmado el Convenio:

- Irlanda
- Eslovenia
- Estonia: Aunque no han firmado el convenio está *prohibido (Animal Protection Act, 2000)*.
- Reino Unido: La caudectomía está prohibida excepto por razones médicas o en animales de trabajo (incluyendo perros de caza) (*Animal Welfare Act, January 2006*).
- Hungría: Las intervenciones quirúrgicas en animales están prohibidas a menos que tengan un fin terapéutico o de prevención para el interés del animal.
- Malta: Las modificaciones de la apariencia de cualquier parte de un animal sin fin curativo son ilegales.
- Polonia: Las mutilaciones deliberadas en animales están prohibidas a no ser que tengan una finalidad médica.

- España: Las mutilaciones en algunas regiones del país se siguen permitiendo para seguir con los estándares raciales y en cambio en otras está prohibido. Este apartado se especificará a continuación en el siguiente apartado.

En definitiva, dentro de la Unión Europea, los países que independientemente hayan firmado el Convenio de Protección de los Animales de Compañía tienen en su legislación la prohibición de realizar cirugías estéticas (caudectomía y otectomía) en los animales de compañía són:

- Austria
- Chipre
- Grecia
- Lituania
- Suecia
- Bulgaria
- Rumanía
- Suiza
- Holanda
- Bélgica
- Dinamarca
- Finlandia
- Alemania
- Estonia
- Reino Unido
- Hungría
- Malta
- Polonia

## 5.2 ÁMBITO ESPAÑOL

Como se ha comentado en el apartado anterior, en el Estado Español la decisión de permitir o prohibir estas prácticas se ha dejado en manos de cada Comunidad Autónoma. A continuación se citarán los diferentes artículos en cada Comunidad donde se hace referencia a las mutilaciones estéticas.

Comunidades en las que está prohibido realizar mutilaciones estéticas:

- **Andalucía.** Ley 11/2003 de 24/11/03 de Protección de los Animales  
...[Artículo 13. Prohibiciones.  
*Practicarles mutilaciones con fines exclusivamente estéticos o sin utilidad alguna salvo las practicadas por veterinarios en caso de necesidad.]...*
- **Aragón.** Ley 11/2003, de 19 de marzo, de protección animal en la Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón  
...[Artículo 3- Prohibiciones generales  
*d. Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto en caso de necesidad médico-quirúrgica, por exigencia funcional o por castraciones, siempre con control de facultativos competente.]...*
- **Cataluña.** Decret Legislatiu 2/2008, de 15 de abril, pel qual s'aprova el text refós de la Llei de protecció dels animals.  
...[Article 5. Prohibicions  
*e) Practicar-los mutilacions, extirpar-los ungles, cordes vocals o altres parts o òrgans, llevat de les intervencions fetes amb assistència veterinària en cas de necessitat terapèutica, per a garantir-ne la salut o per a limitar-ne o anul·lar-ne la capacitat reproductiva. Per motius científics o de maneig, es podran fer aquestes intervencions amb l'obtenció prèvia de l'autorització de l'autoritat competent.]...*
- **Comunidad de Madrid.** Ley 1/1990, de 1 de febrero, de Protección de Animales Domésticos  
...[Artículo 2. Se prohíbe:  
*d. Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las controladas por los veterinarios en caso de necesidad, o por exigencia funcional.]...*



- **Comunidad Valenciana.** Ley 12/2009, de 23 de diciembre, de la Modificación de la Ley 4/1994, de 8 de julio de la Generalitat, sobre protección de animales de compañía

...[Artículo 41

e) *Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las realizadas por veterinarios, en casos de necesidad justificada. En ningún caso se considerará causa justificada la estética.]...*

- **Murcia.** Ley 10/1990, de 27 de agosto, de protección y defensa de los animales de compañía

...[Artículo 2

d) *Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto la intervención veterinaria en caso de necesidad o por exigencia funcional]...*

- **Navarra:** Ley Foral 7/1994, de 31 de mayo, de protección de los animales

...[Artículo 2

e) *Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las controladas por los veterinarios en caso de necesidad o por exigencia funcional.]...*

Comunidades en las que no se prohíbe realizar mutilaciones estéticas:

- **Asturias.** Ley del Principado de Asturias 13/2002, de 23 de diciembre, de Tenencia, Protección y Derechos de los Animales

...[Artículo 6. Prohibición de malos tratos.

1. *Se prohíben los malos tratos a los animales.*

2. *Reglamentariamente se desarrollarán las medidas apropiadas para asegurar su protección frente a los malos tratos o las utilizaciones abusivas y para evitarles sufrimientos innecesarios derivados de las manipulaciones inherentes a las diferentes técnicas de crianza, manejo, estancia, transporte y sacrificio de los animales objeto de esta Ley.]...*

- **Cantabria.** Ley 3/1992, de 18 de marzo, de Protección de los Animales

...[Artículo 2.

*d) Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto: Las efectuadas o controladas por los veterinarios, las realizadas para mantener las características de la raza, o las que correspondan a ventajas de tipo fisiológico y/o de manejo.]...*

- **Canarias.** LEY 8/1991, de 30 de abril, de protección de los animales.

...[Artículo 4. En todo caso, queda prohibido:

*Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las controladas por veterinarios en caso de necesidad, por exigencia funcional o para mantener las características de la raza.]...*

- **Castilla y León.** Ley 5/1997, de 24 de abril, de protección de los animales de compañía.

...[Artículo 4

*d) Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las controladas por veterinarios en caso de necesidad, por exigencias funcionales, por aumento indeseado de la población o para mantener las características propias de la raza.]...*

- **Castilla la Mancha.** Ley 7/1990, de 28 de diciembre, de Protección de los Animales Domésticos

...[Artículo 2. Se prohíbe:

*d) Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las controladas por los veterinarios en caso de necesidad, exigencia funcional o para mantener las características de la raza.]...*

- **Extremadura.** Ley 5/2002, de 23 de mayo, de Protección de los Animales en la Comunidad Autónoma de Extremadura

...[Artículo 2. Se prohíbe:

*f. Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las controladas por los veterinarios en caso de necesidad, o por exigencia funcional, o para mantener los estándares raciales.]...*

- **Galicia:** LEY 1/93 de 13/04/1993 (publicada el 22/04/1993) de protección de los animales domésticos y salvajes en cautividad, en el ámbito de la Comunidad Autónoma de Galicia.

...[Artículo 21

b) *Mutilarlos sin necesidad o sin el adecuado control veterinario.]...*

- **Islas Baleares.** Ley 1/1992, de 8 de abril, de protección de los animales que viven en el entorno humano

...[Artículo 3

h) *Practicar mutilaciones a los animales, excepto las controladas por facultativo competente en caso de necesidad o para darles la presentación habitual de la raza.]...*

- **País Vasco.** Ley 6/1993, de 29 de Octubre, de Protección de los Animales

...[Artículo 4. En todo caso, queda prohibido:

*Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las controladas por veterinarios en caso de necesidad, por exigencia funcional o para mantener las características de la raza.]...*

- **La Rioja.** Ley 2 /2000, de 31 de mayo modificación de la Ley, 5 / 1995 de marzo, de protección de los animales

...[Artículo.

d) *Practicarles mutilaciones, excepto las efectuadas o controladas por los veterinarios en caso de necesidad o por exigencia funcional, o para mantener las características estéticas.]...*

Como se puede observar hay diferentes ideas sobre la prohibición de las mutilaciones en animales de compañía según la Comunidad Autónoma. Podríamos distinguir pues, tres grupos: Comunidades en las que se prohíbe la mutilación de cualquier parte del cuerpo del animal y solo justificable con finalidad terapéutica; Comunidades en las que también se prohíben las mutilaciones pero no son tan detalladas y pueden dar lugar a ambigüedad y por tanto, una mala interpretación de la ley; y por último, Comunidades en las que prohíben las mutilaciones pero al mismo tiempo se considera

justificado el estándar racial. En este último grupo de comunidades, claramente, se observa una contradicción ya que si en primera instancia la ley trata de impedir el sufrimiento de los animales, someterlos a una cirugía con todas las consecuencias (complicaciones, dolor...) que ello conlleva por el mero motivo de la estética pierde todo su fundamento.

Con toda esta disparidad tanto entre países como dentro del mismo país es normal que exista una gran confusión sobre qué es lo que está permitido y qué no, dejando aparte lo que sería la ética y la moral personal. Por ello, para poder aclarar esta confusión general se debería llegar a un acuerdo; al menos, a modo inicio, a nivel nacional, para que el control de la ley y su cumplimiento se pueda llevar a cabo de manera más eficaz. Posteriormente se debería llegar a un acuerdo internacional en el que todos los países miembros de la Unión Europea consensuaran todos sus puntos de vista y además que éstos se contrastaran con sus pros y contras preferiblemente con base científica.

## 6. Entrevistas y encuestas

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### 6.1 ENTREVISTAS:

#### 6.1.1 INTRODUCCIÓN:

Organizamos entrevistas con personal procedente de diferentes sectores relacionados con el corte de colas y orejas. Creímos conveniente incluir a veterinarios, criadores y especialistas en estándar racial como lo son los jueces de concursos de belleza caninos.

La intención principal durante las conversaciones que tuvimos con los veterinarios fue corroborar, o por el contrario, desmentir la *cuestión del dolor*. Es decir, ¿realmente existe dolor, sufrimiento y alteraciones de comportamiento en animales sometidos al corte de colas y orejas, por muy temprana que sea su edad?. Para poder zanjar la *cuestión del dolor* nos pusimos en contacto con cirujanos de clínicas y hospitales catalanes, al ser ellos quienes practican estas intervenciones, con responsables de Medicina Interna quienes nos contaran sus experiencias con estos animales en el post-operatorio, y para conocer si los perros generan cambios comportamentales asociados al corte de orejas y cola, contactamos con un especialista en etología canina.

Las entrevistas a los criadores fueron enfocadas desde el punto de vista legal. Intentamos conocer como les está afectando la entrada en vigor del nuevo decreto legislativo 2/2008 del 15 de abril, ya que comúnmente se considera que un animal con cola y orejas cortadas es más valioso que uno intacto, ya que el primero se aproxima más al prototipo de estándar racial y en un concurso de belleza se le daría más valor. Queremos saber si alguna parte del colectivo se encuentra a favor del decreto ley de regulación del corte de cola y orejas o si algunos han decidido cambiar la raza de cría para evitar las mutilaciones.

La mayor detractora de la nueva normativa es la propia condición cultural. Muchas personas opinan que un perro con mutilaciones estéticas es más bello que uno intacto, ya que al pensar en su raza nos imaginamos el prototipo de estándar racial. Este pensamiento también se extiende a los concursos de belleza ya que los animales con cola y orejas recortadas obtienen mejores puntuaciones. Por estos motivos pensamos que sería interesante contar con la palabra

de un experto en estándar racial canino y que nos explicara los criterios que tienen para puntuar, si es cierto que ejemplares intactos no son admitidos en las competiciones, la subjetividad en la valoración, etc.

## 6.1.2 ENTREVISTAS A VETERINARIOS:

### Entrevista al Dr. Toni Crusellas

Uno de los primeros veterinarios entrevistados fue el Dr. Toni Crusellas, cirujano del Centro Clínico Veterinario de Sant Andreu y gran profesional con muchos años de experiencia. Por las cualidades que reúne nos pareció una idea interesantísima contar con su opinión sobre este tema.

Nos recibió cordialmente en su despacho y nos centramos rápidamente para no malgastar su tiempo. Le entregamos una de nuestras encuestas dirigidas a veterinarios y mientras la leía en voz alta iba añadiendo matices que hicieron fluir la entrevista.

Para empezar le planteamos nuestras líneas de investigación, le explicamos que queríamos conocer la opinión de un cirujano sobre el dolor que padecen los animales sometidos al corte de cola y orejas, y si vale la pena realizar una cirugía tan dolorosa por motivos estéticos (como lo es la otectomía). Nos confesó no apoyar del todo la realización de estas prácticas, sobretudo si se hacían por motivos estéticos. En otros países ya hay leyes que prohíben las otectomías y caudectomías, como la que se aplica hoy en día en algunas comunidades autónomas españolas, pero aún así nos encontramos muy lejos de tener unas buenas leyes de protección animal que prohíban por ejemplo los festejos con animales.

Por otro lado se expresa en desacuerdo con los ingleses ya que aunque llevan prohibiendo las otectomías estéticas desde 1895, aún hoy organizan cacerías de zorros, en su opinión sangrientas, que atentan más gravemente contra la ética ciudadana.

Según su experiencia, las razas en que se realizan más intervenciones de este tipo son: Pit Bull, Bóxer, Schnauzer, Dogo, Dóberman, Pincher, etc. para las otectomías y cocker, cachine, Staffords, Bóxers y Pit Bulls también, para las caudectomías. El motivo principal que mueve a los propietarios a querer realizar estas intervenciones es el lucro personal, tener una mascota que parezca agresiva, o en su opinión más bonita.

Nos confirmó que, desde la entrada en vigor del decreto legislativo en Cataluña, no se realizan otectomías ni caudectomías con fines estéticos en el CCV de Sant Andreu, por ese motivo se ha experimentado una disminución en la realización de estas intervenciones, ya que las que deben

realizarse por motivos terapéuticos son mínimas. También nos confirmó haber observado un aumento de mascotas con cola y orejas intactas que llegan a consulta aunque no cree que tenga que ver con la entrada en vigor de la ley, si no que la disminución de la demanda de estas operaciones se debe a un cambio de tendencias en las razas que están de moda.

El problema con el que se encuentran los veterinarios son los centros de cría, nos dijo. Ya que a los pocos días de vida les cortan las colas ellos mismos, sin intervención de un veterinario y al margen de la legislación, por tanto poco pueden hacer. La caudectomía, si el animal tiene entre 15 y 30 días, es sencilla de realizar, y en muchos centros de cría se ven capacitados para hacerlo. No se arriesgan a hacer otectomías porque es una cirugía más dolorosa, debe realizarse en animales más adultos cuando acabe de formarse el cartílago del pabellón auricular y no arriesgan una camada. Pero con las otectomías los criaderos no se mojan porque venden los cachorros antes de la edad recomendada para hacer el corte de orejas, por tanto la responsabilidad de realizarla o no recae en el veterinario.

Respecto al dolor opina que en las caudectomías, si se realizan entorno a los 15 días de vida, se sabe que son indoloras por el escaso desarrollo del sistema nervioso central que es incapaz de procesar el dolor aunque se esté infringiendo. Pero la verdad que dan unos gritos tremendos cuando realizas el corte ya que se hace sin ningún tipo de anestesia local normalmente. El tema de la anestesia también es controvertido porque, aunque se recomiende un anestésico para evitar que el animal tenga molestias, el cachorro podría no tolerar la anestesia aunque sea local y en spray. Casi que le causaríamos más dolor al pincharle varias veces el anestésico que cortando la cola directamente.



## Entrevista a la Dra. Irene Dante

Otro de los veterinarios entrevistados es la Dra. Irene Dante, también cirujana y colega de profesión del Dr. Toni Crusellas. Juntos forman parte del equipo de cirugía de pequeños animales del CCV de Sant Andreu.

En esta entrevista quisimos centrarnos en la *cuestión del dolor*, ¿cuáles son los mecanismos para poder afirmar que un cachorro no siente dolor al realizarle una caudectomía sin anestesia? Porque según nuestra experiencia los cachorros no chillan tanto cuando los coges o les manipulas las vértebras de la cola, en cambio en el momento del corte el animal expresa dolor mediante alaridos muy fuertes.

Nos hizo recordar una clase que nos impartieron en la asignatura de cirugía, en la que se explicó como la corteza cerebral es la responsable de captar y procesar los estímulos dolorosos, y como ésta no acaba de formarse por completo hasta las 3 semanas de vida. Con esto querían decirnos que teóricamente si realizamos una caudectomía en un animal menor de 3 semanas no es capaz de procesar el dolor porque su corteza cerebral no es capaz de hacerlo, pero sinceramente todavía discrepamos sobre este tema porque como hemos dicho, los cachorros muestran claramente signos de dolor cuando realizamos esta práctica.

Respecto al corte de orejas se mostró totalmente a favor del decreto que las regula ya que considera estas intervenciones más dolorosas que las caudectomías porque se realizan en animales más adultos. Entonces el pabellón auricular es más grueso, tarda más en cicatrizar, etc. Pero es necesario hacerlo en estas condiciones porque así la oreja ha desarrollado toda su estructura cartilaginosa y será capaz de mantenerse erecta. Aquí sí se precisa de anestesia local como mínimo. Nos asegura que en su centro se administra anestesia si se precisa y siempre una terapia analgésica de soporte para el post-operatorio. Nos confesó que hoy por hoy se negaría a realizar otectomías por otra finalidad que no fuera la terapéutica.

Coincide con su compañero, en que la frecuencia con la que se realizan las amputaciones estéticas ha disminuido en los últimos años a raíz de la aplicación del decreto legislativo 2/2008 del 15 de abril. Además también ha observado un aumento de las mascotas con las orejas intactas en consulta y por la calle, y piensa que las personas nos hemos empezado a concienciar a raíz de que lo hicieran otros países europeos. Aun así afirma que las caudectomías se siguen

viendo con la misma frecuencia pero que la mayoría se realizan en los centros de cría y por personal no autorizado, y pocos per veterinarios colegiados. Cuando el animal es adquirido por el propietario ya suele venir con la caudectomía hecha y no suele ser el propietario quien lo elige, en cambio las otectomías sí.

## **Entrevista al Dr. Josep M<sup>a</sup> Arenal**

El Dr. Josep M<sup>a</sup> Arenal es uno de los veterinarios responsables del equipo de Medicina Interna del CCV de Sant Andreu. Hemos decidido acudir a él para que nos responda a preguntas sobre el dolor en el post-operatorio, por su experiencia en cuidados intensivos, y también sobre las complicaciones asociadas a estas intervenciones que suelen observar cuando los pacientes vienen a las visitas de seguimiento.

Además también le ofrecimos una de nuestras encuestas especializadas que aceptó contestar con mucho gusto.

Le preguntamos de nuevo que grado de dolor creía que padecían los animales sometidos a estas intervenciones, y nos contestó que ellos no practican caudectomías actualmente pero que al hacerlo a los pocos días de vida el animal apenas siente dolor porque la cola es muy pequeña y las vértebras se separan fácilmente. Además no suelen observar complicaciones porque como apenas se mueven y no se lamen, la herida cicatriza rápidamente sin infectarse. Le preguntamos entonces porqué chillaban tanto cuando se producía el corte y nos contestó que obviamente alguna sensación de presión deben sentir que no les gusta.

Respecto al corte de orejas se mostró en desacuerdo siempre y cuando sea por motivos estéticos. Nos confesó como detestaba escuchar los sollozos de dolor cuando los perros se despertaban del post-operatorio y se alegra de que por fin hayan tomado ejemplo de Europa y hayan reformado las leyes. Aunque no se solían presentar complicaciones por infecciones secundarias, el principal problema de la otectomía es que las orejas no quedasen erectas y el propietario no quedase contento.

Al preguntarle si utilizaban algún tipo de anestésico sistémico o local para realizar las operaciones nos dijo que ellos lo que recomendaban era no aplicar anestésicos de ningún tipo en cachorros menores de 3 semanas porque son tan pequeños que no tienen capacidad de eliminar el fármaco y podemos comprometer su vida. En cambio para otectomías se recomienda anestesia general aunque en algunas clínicas se realiza con anestesia local y el animal consciente. En ambas intervenciones y sin tener en cuenta la edad, se recomienda administrar fluidoterapia, curas de la herida, cambiar los vendajes de las orejas periódicamente y comprobar que no aparece necrosis, y sobretodo administrar analgésicos durante un tiempo

para apaciguar el dolor post-operatorio que dura varios días. Sobretudo hay que evitar que se lo toque o rasque para que la herida evolucione bien y la oreja no caiga.

Como sus anteriores colegas de profesión, no considera las mutilaciones estéticas un acto de crueldad en sí, pero le parece egoísta que el motivo de la amputación sea meramente estético y se lleve a cabo por el capricho del propietario. Además puede verse que los animales lo pasan mal unos días, sobretudo con las otectomías.

Pero tampoco quiere criticar a los profesionales que lo practican ya que la clínica de pequeños animales es un negocio y los veterinarios deben ganarse la vida con sus prácticas ante todo.

## **Entrevista al Dr. Pau Rius**

Todo estudiante de veterinaria se ha planteado alguna vez el compromiso ético que envuelve a la cuestión de las otectomías y caudectomías, y cada vez más personas sin conocimientos médicos no están dispuestos a dejarse convencer por demagogia a favor de los rasgos estéticos y de estándar racial. Empiezan a comprender que éstas prácticas no pueden ser aceptadas.

Una vez sometemos estas prácticas a un juicio etológico nos planteamos preguntas como si tenemos derecho a obligar a nuestras mascotas a pasar por una cirugía estética, al dolor que trae asociada, a las posibles complicaciones, etc. Puramente por capricho.

Algunos artículos mencionan como el corte de orejas sobretodo puede provocar un cambio comportamental que se asocia al dolor. Por este motivo creímos apropiado incluir la palabra del especialista en Etología Animal Dr. Pau Rius, especialista en Etología canina i felina del CCV de Sant Andreu.

El Dr. Pau Rius nos puntualizó que efectivamente, no se aprecian cambios comportamentales evidentes una vez el animal se ha recuperado de las lesiones quirúrgicas, pero sí se observan síntomas asociados al dolor durante el post-quirúrgico. Podemos observar como el animal no quiere mamar o comer, se queja mucho porque le duele, se mueve poco, está apático, se rasca, ladea la cabeza, etc. También nos explicó que los perros tienen un lenguaje corporal muy sutil y su instrumento para comunicarse es la posición de sus orejas, por tanto los perros sometidos a estas intervenciones tendrán dificultades para expresar sumisión o rendición, ya que sus orejas siempre indicaran estado de alerta. Puede que el animal en sí no modifique su comportamiento pero para el resto de perros estará marcando una actitud desafiante y esto puede culminar en peleas.

Nos interesaba conocer la postura de un etólogo sobre la realización de estas prácticas, ¿las consideraría un acto de crueldad?. Su respuesta no fue un Sí rotundo, pero sí se mostró más reacio a intentar comprenderlas, porque según su punto de vista no podía concebir que una persona que tiene devoción por su mascota, la obligue a someterse a una operación quirúrgica bastante dolorosa puramente por capricho (se está refiriendo a las otectomías).

De todas formas cree, que las tendencias están cambiando y cada vez más propietarios prefieren sus mascotas intactas, se conciencian del dolor injustificado que se les está infringiendo y, tomando ejemplo de otros países europeos, se oponen a ello.

También nos explicó como en algunos pueblos remotos existen tradiciones muy arraigadas de pastores y cazadores, que cortan las orejas y la cola a los neonatos a golpe de machete. Estos tipos de mutilaciones no se pueden controlar y son difíciles de eliminar porque ellos creen tener motivos muy bien fundados para seguir con la tradición: lo hacen para evitarles lesiones posteriores causadas por lobos y osos.

### 6.1.3 CONCLUSIONES DE LAS ENTREVISTAS A VETERINARIOS:

Las entrevistas con veterinarios nos proporcionó mucha información y a la vez nos sirvió para plantearnos nuevas preguntas sobre el tema. Durante las conversaciones que tuvimos con todos ellos, era fácil darse cuenta que ninguno de ellos se encontraba totalmente cómodo hablando del tema, ya que cada profesional tiene diferentes opiniones sobre el umbral del dolor en cachorros, los cirujanos opinan de una forma, los internistas de otra, etc. Pero todos se mostraron (en mayor o menor grado) en contra de éstas prácticas y más si no están reguladas por veterinarios.

Estaban de acuerdo en general que las intervenciones estéticas se habían reducido mucho en los últimos años, ya sea en respuesta a la ley o por motivos de cambios de moda, hace años estaban muy de moda los dóbermans y bóxers, y ahora lo están los bulldogs franceses.

Respecto a la *cuestión del dolor* no conseguimos respuestas claras y contundentes, esto significa que nadie ha conseguido demostrar nada en claro sobre el tema del dolor asociado a las mutilaciones quirúrgicas, ni siquiera veterinarios experimentados. Nadie quiere mojarse porque el tema es muy controvertido. Hay muchos sectores comerciales que les interesa que estas prácticas continúen realizándose y si nadie consigue demostrar que los animales por muy jóvenes que sean padecen un dolor injustificado durante el corte de colas y orejas, continuaran haciéndose con o sin límites legales. Ni tan siquiera un investigador de la materia ha conseguido determinar cuáles son los umbrales de dolor en las distintas edades, por tanto es imposible determinar de forma unánime si un cachorro de 2 semanas siente o no dolor durante una caudectomía. Mediante explicaciones teóricas, los cirujanos entrevistados nos han intentado hacer comprender que sin el completo desarrollo neurológico sería imposible que los cachorros llegaran a sentir dolor, pero lo cierto es que todos se sienten incómodos al realizar estas intervenciones, porque generalmente no les gusta realizar operaciones estéticas, si no que consideran que una intervención quirúrgica es algo serio y que conlleva muchas complicaciones (desde la herida a la anestesia ya que no hay tantos estudios como en humana) por tanto solo se debe recurrir a ella cuando sea la mejor o la única opción. No se debe jugar con la vida de un animal joven por un capricho estético del propietario, hay veterinarios que lo comprenden y se niegan a realizar estas intervenciones aún antes de la entrada en vigor del decreto 2/2008, e intentan educar a los propietarios para que se replanteen sus decisiones. Pero no hay que

olvidar que la clínica de pequeños animales es un negocio y siempre hay que intentar, en la medida de lo posible y legal, satisfacer las necesidades del propietario y siempre tenerlo contento.

Ninguno de los veterinarios entrevistados lo considera un acto de crueldad como tal, pero todos coinciden en que las otectomías son bastante dolorosas, y si el motivo para realizarlas es puramente estético, lo consideran un acto de egoísmo más que de crueldad ya que hacer pasar por un dolor innecesario a su mascota por un fin lucrativo es un acto que por lo menos se debe criticar. Las mascotas no son adornos ni objetos decorativos, tenemos que tratarlos por lo que son, seres vivos y no complementos.



#### 6.1.4 ENTREVISTAS EN CENTROS DE CRÍA:

Mediante búsquedas en internet, nos pusimos en contacto con cerca de 10 centros de cría canina, pero solo 5 de ellos se ofrecieron a atender nuestras preguntas y a responder el cuestionario. Las búsquedas se centraron en centros de cría catalanes que produjeran razas con estándar racial de amputaciones de cola y/o orejas.

Los centros seleccionados fueron:

- **Boxers de la Ragua** (Barcelona).
- **Alidog**, criador de Boxer, Yorkshire Terrier y Schnauzer miniatura (Caldes de Montbui, Barcelona).
- **Yorkshire de Corte Imperial** (Mataró, Barcelona).
- **Residencia Can Ninos**, cría de Schnauzer y Rottweiler. (Caldes de Montbui, Barcelona).
- **Gos Can**, cría de Cocker entre otros. (St. Joan de Vilatorrada, Barcelona).

Al principio obtuvimos muchas negativas, el personal que nos atendió al teléfono no comprendía la finalidad de nuestras preguntas y tenían miedo de comprometerse con sus respuestas. Les explicamos que no éramos policías, ni de hacienda, ni del gobierno, que nuestras encuestas servirían meramente para complementar un trabajo universitario y que ninguna respuesta tendría consecuencias legales. Notamos cierto reparo al mencionar que éramos estudiantes de veterinaria, al parecer no nos tienen mucha confianza porque suelen ser duramente criticados por el colectivo veterinario.

Unos muy amablemente, otros no tanto, nos dejaron claro que no incumplían la ley vigente en ningún aspecto, es decir, no realizaban cortes de cola y ni de orejas con finalidades estéticas.

Nos dijeron que ellos los vendían intactos una vez destetados y con las primeras vacunas, y el propietario decidía si practicarle las amputaciones o no en un veterinario. Ninguno confesó realizar caudectomías sistemáticas, cosa que todos los veterinarios aseguran que tampoco practican, que los animales que llegan a consulta para poner las segundas vacunas ya tienen la caudectomía hecha y el propietario explica como ya lo adquirió así. Eso significa que el único lugar donde pueden haber sido realizadas las amputaciones son en los centros de cría, pocos días después del nacimiento.

También nos confesaron como a raíz del nuevo decreto ley que regula los cortes de cola y orejas, las ventas de cachorros han disminuido porque a los compradores no les gustan los animales intactos, nos intentan convencer diciéndonos: "Tú si eres una persona que le gusta la raza Bóxer y vienes buscando uno, querrás llevarte el que tenga la cola cortada porque un Bóxer con la cola larga no parece un Bóxer". "Ahora la gente prefiere comprar en Europa, sobretodo países del este donde las amputaciones estéticas son totalmente legales y los cachorros llegan con la cola y orejas cortadas desde el país de origen".

Al preguntarle sobre la postura que tienen acerca de la nueva legislación que prohíbe el corte de cola y orejas con fines estéticos o de estándar racial, el 100% de los centros encuestados respondieron que se oponen totalmente porque alegan que les está suponiendo una bajada de los ingresos ya que los cachorros intactos no se venden. Aunque al mismo tiempo, algunos de ellos nos dijeron que no vendían cachorros con la cola intacta, es decir que indirectamente nos estaba diciendo que cortaban las colas en el centro. Incluso la telefonista de uno de los centros (suponemos que de forma inocente) nos llegó a confesar que las realizaban los mismos cuidadores del centro, porque el resto de entrevistados media mucho las palabras con las que nos respondía.

Los centros que nos confesaron que en algún momento habían practicado el corte de colas y orejas, nos aseguraron que las intervenciones siempre fueron realizadas por veterinarios y bajo condiciones asépticas adecuadas.

### 6.1.5 CONCLUSIONES DE LAS ENTREVISTAS EN CENTROS DE CRÍA:

Nos ha sido difícil sacar información sobre el tema de las amputaciones estéticas en este sector, pero rápidamente nos hemos hecho una idea de cómo trabajan y de cómo mienten.

Aun existiendo un decreto autonómico que prohíbe las mutilaciones estéticas, éstas se siguen haciendo en los centros de cría de forma sistemática. Aunque sólo un centro haya admitido realizar cortes de cola, no nos creemos que en el resto de centros no se realicen. Tenemos los testimonios de veterinarios que llevan muchos años ejerciendo, que nos dicen que ellos no practican caudectomías en cachorros normalmente sino que, cuando el propietario adquiere el animal ya tiene la amputación de cola hecha si éste procede de criadero o de *petshop*.

Queda claro en los resultados de las encuestas, que en los centros de cría conocen la existencia de la legislación de protección animal contra otectomías y caudectomías, pero aun así se siguen realizando porque los estándares raciales no han cambiado y los compradores siguen demandando ejemplares con la cola cortada porque son más bonitos a su parecer. Con la excusa de la bajada en las ventas, los criadores se respaldan y siguen practicando caudectomías para que las ventas supuestamente no bajen. Pero dudamos que la caída de las ventas sea debida a que ahora tienen que vender animales intactos porque en ningún momento se han dejado de practicar estas intervenciones por tanto las ventas han debido de bajar por otro motivo, quizás la situación económica mundial.

En cambio cuando nos dicen que no practican otectomías les damos un voto de confianza porque sabemos que esta intervención precisa de conocimientos más amplios de medicina y cirugía, precisa de anestesia general y puede quedar un mal resultado si no lo realiza un profesional. En los centros de cría normalmente se ven capacitados para realizar cortes de cola antes de las 3 semanas de vida porque es una práctica relativamente sencilla y no precisa anestesia, pero no se arriesgan a estropear una camada por un corte de orejas prematuro o mal realizado. Prefieren dejar esa opción al propietario.

Aun obteniendo estos resultados, cabe decir que en nuestra búsqueda de centros de cría para entrevistar, encontramos muchos otros que exponían imágenes en la web de los cachorros a la venta y ninguno de ellos tenía la caudectomía realizada. Nos llamó la atención como cada vez más los criaderos se reinventan en hogares idílicos, en mitad del campo, donde los animales

salen y pasean, etc. Y donde al animal se le da el trato de ser vivo y no de complemento al que realizarle mutilaciones estéticas, aunque la posición de todos los entrevistados fue posicionarse en contra de la ley de protección animal, porque en algún momento les ha causado dolores de cabeza.

No queremos dejar a los centros de cría en mal lugar, aunque la opinión de los veterinarios expertos sobre ellos no sea muy buena en relación a las mutilaciones estéticas. Pero tenemos que decir que estos lugares están evolucionando y muchas de las personas que se dedican ahora a la cría de cachorros lo hacen desde el respeto que se merecen los animales, y por fin se ha conseguido que en muchos centros ya no se practiquen las amputaciones estéticas.

## 6.1.6 ENTREVISTA A UN JUEZ DE CONCURSO DE BELLEZA CANINA DE LA RSCE:

### Entrevista a Don Vicente Gasco Correcher

Queríamos entrevistar a un juez de la RSCE (Real Sociedad Canina Española) especializado en concursos de belleza canina para lograr comprender por qué el gusto o lo atractivo radica en las amputaciones estéticas en un gran número de razas caninas, ya que teníamos entendido que los animales con cola y orejas amputadas, si su estándar racial lo dicta así, serán mejor puntuados que si están intactos.

Dentro de la web de la RSCE buscamos donde se celebraban los próximos campeonatos nacionales decididas a presentarnos allí en busca de entrevistas. Nos informaron que en el mes de diciembre se organizaban en Valencia y Alicante así que nos dispusimos rumbo Alicante, donde una de las integrantes del grupo tiene su domicilio, en busca de un juez especialista en estándar racial que arrojara luz a nuestras preguntas. Además el evento nos permitió contactar con más criadores a los que hacer entrevistas y repartirles cuestionarios.

Uno de los jueces muy amablemente accedió a responder a nuestras breves preguntas. Una de nuestras dudas principales sobre los cánones de belleza canino, es de qué forma se puntúa un individuo de una raza específica, qué se tiene en cuenta y hasta qué nivel es objetivo y no influye el hecho de que a una persona le guste más o menos ese perro. Nos respondió que ellos puntúan del 1 al 5 normalmente diferentes aspectos del can como el pelaje, las extremidades, la condición corporal, la posición de la cabeza respecto a las patas y la cola, la dentadura, si están enteros, etc. Pero admite que juega un papel muy importante los gustos de cada juez y la puntuación final no suele ser 100% objetiva.

Le planteamos si era cierto que los perros con cola y orejas intactas no podían competir en concursos de belleza canina, y nos puntualizó que hace unos años así era pero a raíz de las leyes prohibitorias en Inglaterra y Alemania respecto a las otectomías se empezaron a presentar en concursos de belleza caninos a nivel mundial animales con las orejas intactas, ya que en algunos países era ilegal amputarlas. Desde entonces se vieron obligados a permitir animales con las orejas intactas dentro de los concursos de belleza, aunque algunos jueces los puntúen peor, pero eso es su criterio subjetivo. Pero de momento no se aceptan participantes con la cola intacta si su estándar racial dicta lo contrario. Nos confesó que algunos jueces tienen opiniones

muy personales de cómo debe ser morfológicamente una raza, normalmente suelen ser muy especialistas en una raza en concreto y la imagen del ejemplar modelo acostumbra a tener la cola amputada y las orejas recortadas. Pero siempre dijo que era una opinión personal de algunos y que no representaba al colectivo de jueces.

También nos puntualizó que dentro de una categoría de raza no se hacen distinciones entre animales con amputación de cola/orejas y aquellos intactos, todos se valoran por igual dentro del mismo grupo.

También confirmó que su colectivo había notado un aumento de los participantes con orejas intactas en los concursos y cómo éstos habían sido campeones en su categoría de raza, así que poco a poco los animales de orejas caídas van ganándose un lugar en las competiciones de belleza. Nos habló de países como Finlandia donde es ilegal el corte de colas y en sus concursos de belleza caninos permiten presentar animales con la cola intacta, quizás si Finlandia tuviera que participar en competiciones a nivel mundial se empezarían a aceptar los ejemplares de cola larga como ha pasado con las orejas caídas.

Al ser un especialista en estándares raciales creímos conveniente preguntarle si veía una solución factible modificar los estándares raciales para evitar que se sigan cortando colas y orejas de forma ilegal. Así, si todo el mundo tuviera una imagen modelo del cocker con cola larga ya no se practicarían más caudectomías en esta raza. Su respuesta fue esperanzadora, ya que nos informó de que los estándares raciales cambian constantemente, y gracias a la presión de Inglaterra, Alemania, España y Finlandia entre otros, cada vez los ejemplares intactos son mejor valorados en los concursos de belleza caninos.

### **6.1.7 CONCLUSIONES DE LA ENTREVISTA A UN JUEZ DE CONCURSO DE BELLEZA CANINA DE LA RSCE:**

Aunque la opinión de un juez de concurso de belleza poco tiene que decir sobre si las mutilaciones estéticas pueden considerarse un acto de crueldad o si significa causarles un dolor innecesario e injustificado, nos parecía importante incluir sus comentarios sobre los estándares raciales y si en estos concursos se discrimina a los perros no mutilados.

Lo que pudimos sacar en claro fue, que si con suerte los ciudadanos siguen concienciándose de que los animales son seres vivos y sufren dolor igual que lo padecemos nosotros, los estándares raciales podrían modificarse hasta tener modelos animales con cola y orejas intactas, así poco a poco la gente se acostumbraría a verlos y a la larga a todo el mundo les parecería normal, y por fin llegar a entender que es una locura amputar la cola a un cachorro de pocos días de vida, igual que recortar las orejas de un perro a nuestro gusto.

Aun así, algunos jueces opinan totalmente lo contrario. Son fervientes seguidores de una raza y defienden que se mantengan las características de cola corta y orejas erectas. Como las modificaciones de estándar racial se hacen por consenso, es difícil cambiarlo cuando las opiniones están tan divididas. A la hora de puntuar en las competiciones de belleza muchos jueces se dejan llevar por sus preferencias y muchos puntúan mucho mejor a los animales con mutilaciones estéticas realizadas. Esto hace que siempre haya un mercado para estas intervenciones.

## **6.2 ENCUESTAS:**

### **6.2.1 INTRODUCCIÓN:**

Las encuestas han sido realizadas con el objetivo de obtener un sondeo sobre la opinión actual que la gente de a pie tiene sobre las amputaciones estéticas en perros de compañía. Además de valorar la postura que han tomado veterinarios y centros de cría frente al decreto legislativo 2/2008 aplicado en Cataluña y que prohíbe las mutilaciones con fines estéticos.

Aunque se recomendó hacer un cuestionario común, decidimos realizar varios tipos de encuesta con preguntas específicas dirigidas a cada grupo. Los grupos son veterinarios, propietarios y centros de cría, son tan distintos en su grado de especialización que precisan de exámenes diferentes.

Las encuestas a veterinarios fueron realizadas con el fin de observar el impacto que ha tenido la entrada en vigor del decreto ley 2/2008 en Cataluña, la repercusión económica que le supone a las clínicas de pequeños animales y con qué grado se está aplicando. También nos interesaba saber la posición a favor y en contra que tienen los veterinarios sobre el tema de las mutilaciones estéticas, su opinión sobre el dolor post-operatorio y si podían considerarlo un acto de crueldad.

Las encuestas a criadores fueron realizadas con la finalidad de saber si en estos centros se practican cortes de cola y orejas no reguladas y con fines estéticos. Nos interesaba conocer con qué frecuencia se realizan estas operaciones y si los centros que las practican conocen la existencia de leyes que regulan el corte de colas y orejas. No ha sido fácil conseguir entrevistas y personal dispuesto a contestar las encuestas pero hemos intentado realizar un número significativo de ellas.

Las encuestas a propietarios fueron realizadas con el objetivo de conocer las preferencias que tiene un comprador a la hora de adquirir un cachorro. Queremos observar el efecto que tienen los estándares raciales sobre las personas que deciden adquirir una mascota, es decir, ¿agradan más los cachorros con orejas y/o cola cortada o los cachorros intactos?. También nos interesa conocer los motivos por los que los propietarios llegan a realizar el corte de cola y orejas, y también la postura a favor o en contra que tiene la gente de a pie sobre dichas operaciones.



## Encuesta a VETERINARIOS:

Mayores de 35 años  Menores de 35 años

**1. ¿Ha realizado alguna de éstas intervenciones quirúrgicas?:**

- Sí, otectomías.
- Sí, caudectomías.
- No, nunca he realizado ninguna de estas intervenciones quirúrgicas.

**2. Si la respuesta anterior es afirmativa, ¿con qué finalidad se llevan a cabo dichas intervenciones?**

- Estética o de estándar racial.
- Terapéutica (evitar lesiones e infecciones).
- Considera que son cirugías que forman parte de su trabajo y no discrimina el motivo.
- Otras. ....

**3. ¿En qué razas se realizan con más frecuencia las caudectomías y otectomías?**

- Bóxer.
- Dogo alemán y argentino.
- Doberman.
- American Staffordshire o Stafford shire bullterrier.
- Schnauzer.
- Cocker spaniel o americano.
- Otras. ....

**4. ¿Con cuánta frecuencia realiza otectomías y caudectomías?**

- 1 - 10 intervenciones al año.
- 10 - 20 intervenciones al año.
- Más de 20 intervenciones al año.

**5. ¿Están realizando estas intervenciones con la misma frecuencia que hace unos años, antes de que entrara en vigor del decreto legislativo 2/2008 del 15 de abril?**

- Sí.  No.

**6. Respecto a la cirugía, ¿acostumbra a administrar algún anestésico local en cachorros?**

- Sí en otectomías.                       No en otectomías.  
 Sí en caudectomías.                       No en otectomías.

**7. ¿Cuáles son los efectos indeseados que más comúnmente aparecen asociados a estas intervenciones?**

- Infecciones post-quirúrgicas.  
 En otectomías, que las orejas no se mantengan erectas.  
 Dolor post-operatorio prolongado.

**8. Pensamos que el dolor en el post-operatorio se encuentra infravalorado a causa de afirmaciones infundadas que han influido culturalmente, ¿según su experiencia, qué grado de dolor piensa que padecen estos animales?**

- Ninguno.  
 Ligero o moderado.  
 Significativo.  
 Severo.

**9. ¿Cree o conoce casos de criadores, pajarerías u otros locales especializados en animales que realicen estas prácticas por su cuenta?**

- Muchos.  
 Algunos.  
 Ninguno.

**10. ¿Qué opinión tiene sobre la nueva normativa catalana que prohíbe las intervenciones estéticas, excepto por motivos terapéuticos y siempre que las lleve a cabo un veterinario y bajo condiciones de anestesia?**

- Totalmente a favor.  
 Discrepo en algunos aspectos.  
 Totalmente en contra.

**11. ¿Sabía que en otros países de la UE (Alemania e Inglaterra), las intervenciones estéticas llevan reguladas varios años?**

- Sí.                       No.

**12. ¿Cree que la prohibición de estas prácticas ha supuesto un aumento de las intervenciones no reguladas y un descenso de los ingresos en las clínicas catalanas?**

Sí.                       No.

**13. ¿Hoy por hoy, seguiría realizando otectomías y caudectomías a pesar de la prohibición legal?**

Sí.                       No.

**14. Después de la entrada en vigor de la nueva ley de regulación de las mutilaciones estéticas, ¿ha observado un aumento de clientes reacios a llevar a cabo estas prácticas en sus mascotas?, es decir, ¿ha observado un mayor número de animales intactos?**

Sí.                       No.

**15. ¿Se ha negado en alguna ocasión a realizar otectomías o caudectomías antes de la entrada en vigor del decreto legislativo 2/2008 del 15 de abril?**

Sí.                       No.

**16. ¿Considera estas prácticas un acto de crueldad?**

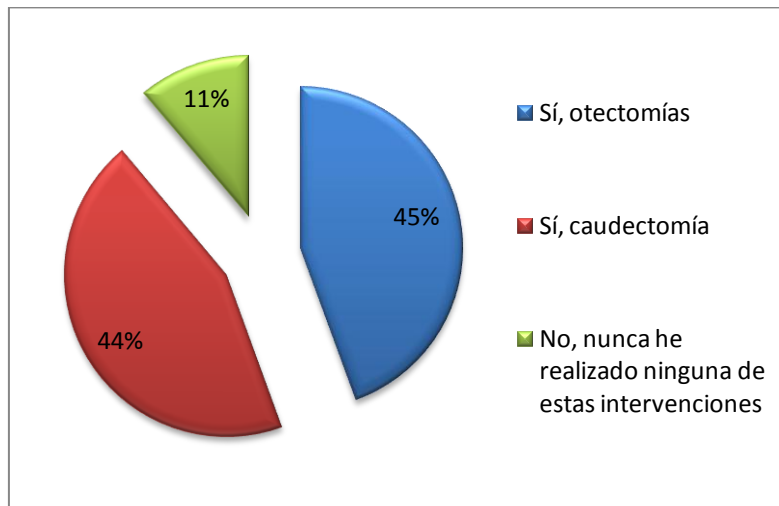
Sí.                       No.

## 6.2.2. BALANCE DE LAS RESPUESTAS OBTENIDAS EN LA ENCUESTA

### Grupo: VETERINARIOS

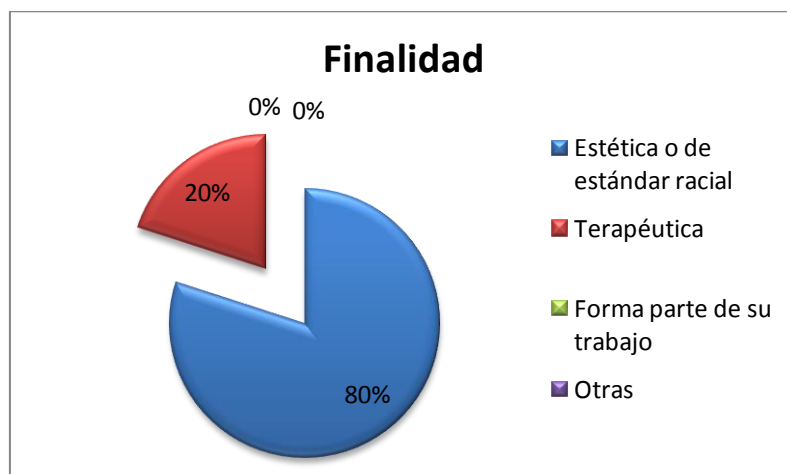
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#### 1. ¿Ha realizado alguna de éstas intervenciones quirúrgicas?



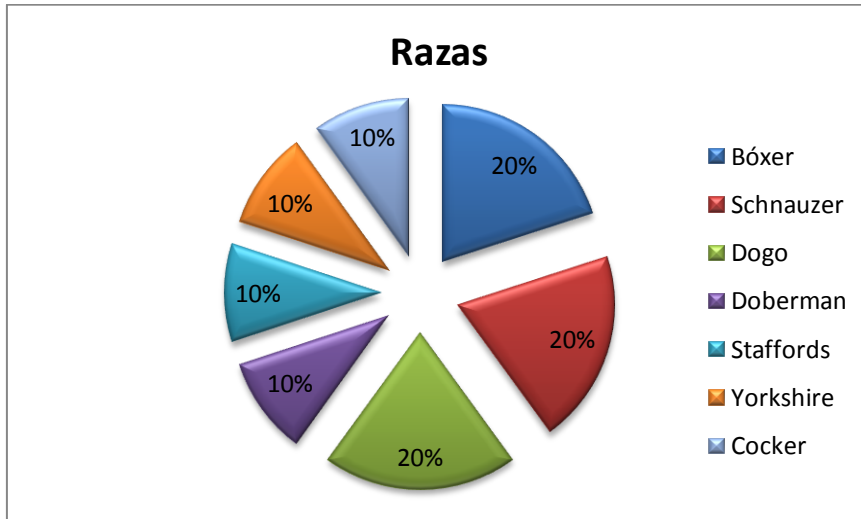
De todos los veterinarios encuestados, solo un 11% admitió no haber realizado nunca ninguna de éstas intervenciones. Tiene que ver con que este 11% eran veterinarios menores de 35 años y con pocos años de experiencia a sus espaldas, algunos licenciados posterior al 2008 cuando la ley ya estaba vigente. Del mismo modo, todos los veterinarios encuestados con edades superiores a los 35 años habían practicado alguna vez en su vida una otectomía y una caudectomía, sobretodo durante la década de los 90.

#### 2. Si la respuesta anterior es afirmativa, ¿con qué finalidad se llevan a cabo dichas intervenciones?

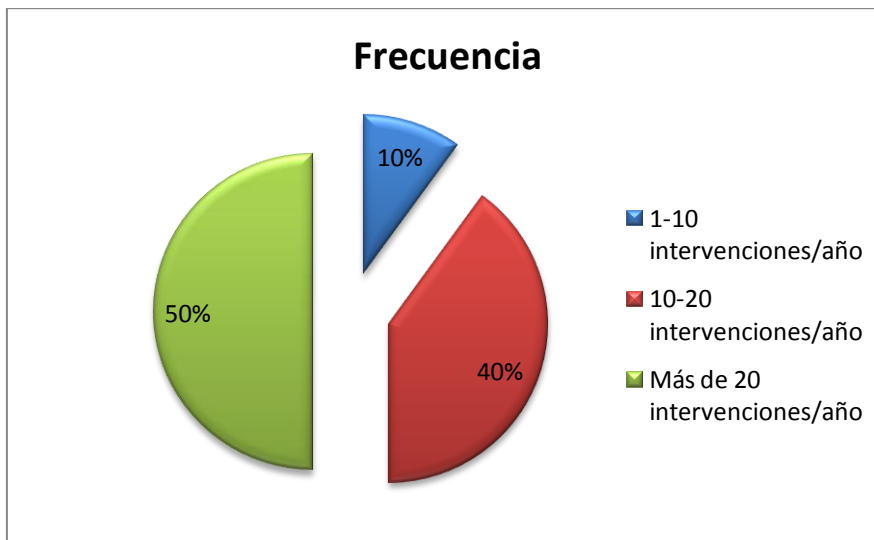


El 80% de los veterinarios encuestados afirman que las caudectomías y otectomías se realizan normalmente por petición del propietario y con fines estéticos. Solo algunos casos puntuales necesitan una otectomía o caudectomía por motivos terapéuticos (es muy raro).

**3. ¿En qué razas se realizan con más frecuencia las caudectomías y otectomías?**

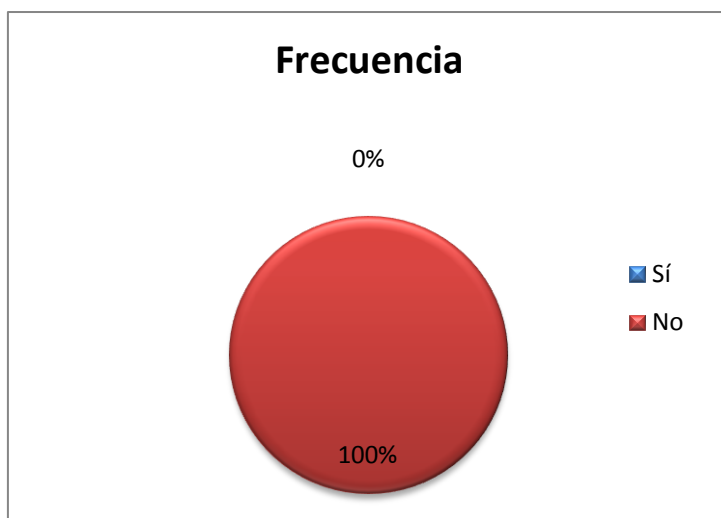


**4. ¿Con cuánta frecuencia realiza otectomías y caudectomías?**



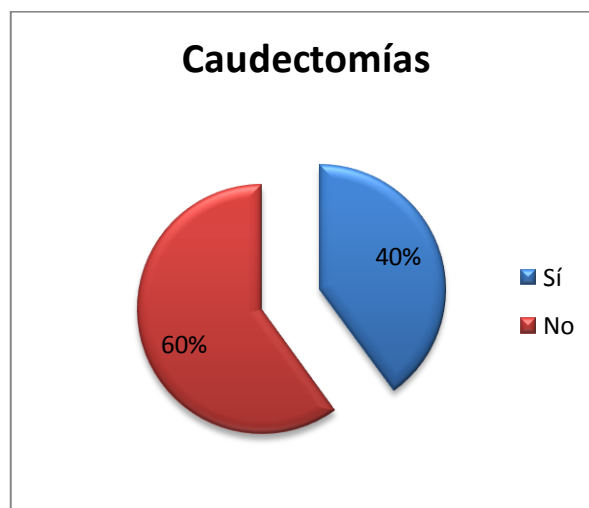
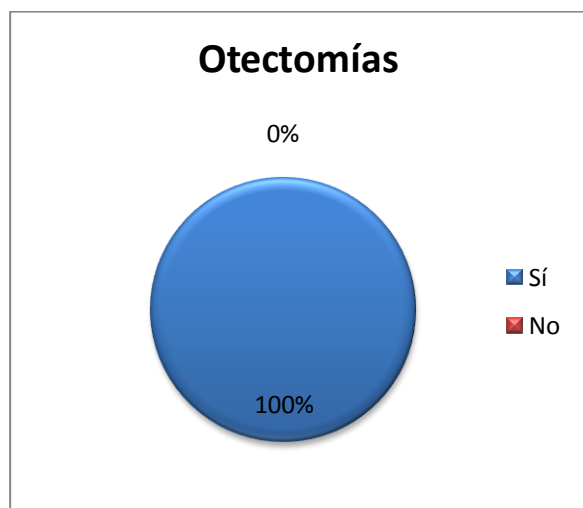
En Cataluña ahora mismo no deberían haber veterinarios ejerciendo estas prácticas en sus clínicas, aunque no podemos ni afirmar ni negar rotundamente que se hagan en alguna parte. De todos modos, todos los profesionales que afirmaron haber realizado estas intervenciones nos dijeron que cuando todavía era legal se hacían muchas al año, más de 20 y de 30.

5. ¿Están realizando estas intervenciones con la misma frecuencia que hace unos años, antes de que entrara en vigor del decreto legislativo 2/2008 del 25 de abril?



Todos los veterinarios coincidieron en que estas prácticas se realizan cada vez con menos frecuencia porque la prohibición solo restringe las operaciones estéticas y éstas suponen un 80% del total de caudectomías y otectomías que se realizan.

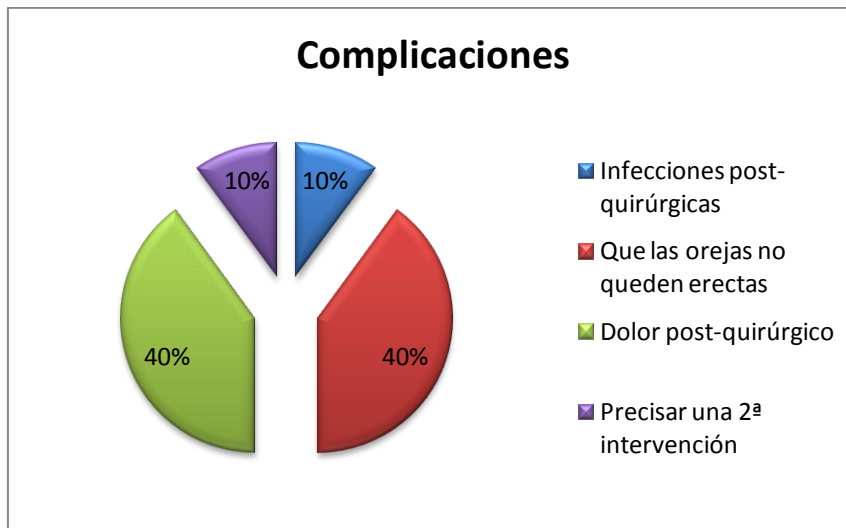
6. Respecto a la cirugía, ¿acostumbra a administrar algún anestésico local en cachorros?



Respecto las otectomías, todos los profesionales coinciden que precisan de anestesia obligatoriamente (como mínimo local) porque el corte que debe realizarse sangra mucho al ser el pabellón auricular de un grosor considerable. Se debe practicar en animales de 1-3 meses, edad ideal porque se acaba de formar el cartílago de la oreja y ya pueden administrarse anestésicos sin peligro. En cambio en caudectomías, el 60% de los veterinarios responden que no aplican anestesia, no porque no se deba, si no porque el animal es tan pequeño que pondríamos en riesgo su vida, además los pinchazos en la cola necesarios

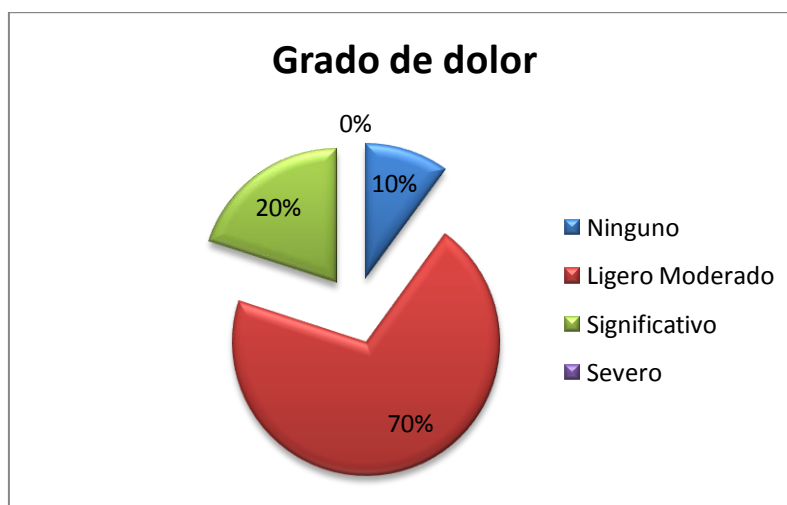
para administrar el anestésico local causarían más dolor que el corte en sí. En el HCV de Bellaterra nos han dicho que siempre aplicaban analgésicos para mitigar el dolor al no poder poner anestesia.

**7. ¿Cuáles son las complicaciones que más comúnmente aparecen asociados a estas intervenciones?**



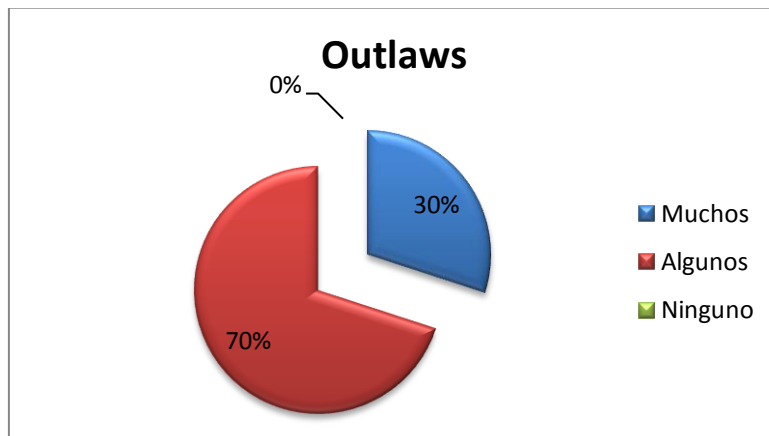
El dolor post-quirúrgico y los resultados antiestéticos, como que las orejas no queden erectas o del gusto deseado por el propietario, son las complicaciones más comunes. La mayoría de veterinarios nos dijeron que no se sentían cómodos realizando estas prácticas porque no les gustaba oír como los perros se quedaban chillando toda la noche después de practicarles amputaciones estéticas, sobretodo con otectomías.

**8. Pensamos que el dolor en el post-operatorio se encuentra infravalorado a causa de afirmaciones infundadas que han influido culturalmente, ¿según su experiencia, qué grado de dolor piensa que padecen estos animales?**



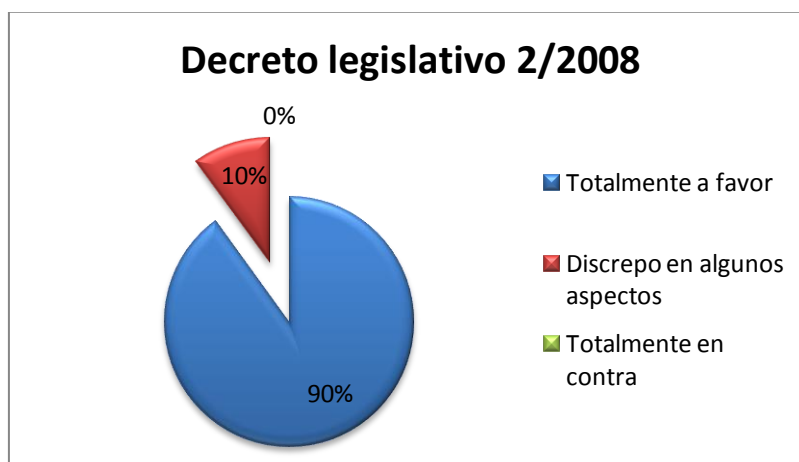
El 70% no niegan la existencia de dolor cuando se realizan las mutilaciones ya que alegan que son claramente evidentes los signos de dolor que expresa el animal. Algunos pensaban, que sobretudo las otectomías causaban un dolor significativo durante el post-operatorio en el que el animal se encuentra abatido y muy dolorido. Solo un 10% dijo creer que los perros no sienten dolor con estas prácticas, sobretudo al referirse a las caudectomías alegando que al no estar formada del todo la corteza cerebral es imposible procesar el dolor o que el animal pueda asociar la intervención con el dolor.

**9. ¿Cree o conoce casos de criaderos, pajarerías u otros locales especializados en animales que realicen estas prácticas por su cuenta?**



El 100% de los veterinarios encuestados conocían lugares donde se practicaban antes mutilaciones estéticas, sobretudo criaderos y tiendas de animales. Pero con la nueva legislación autonómica se está empezando a regular pero piensan que en algunos sitios aun se siguen llevando a cabo estas prácticas fuera de la ley.

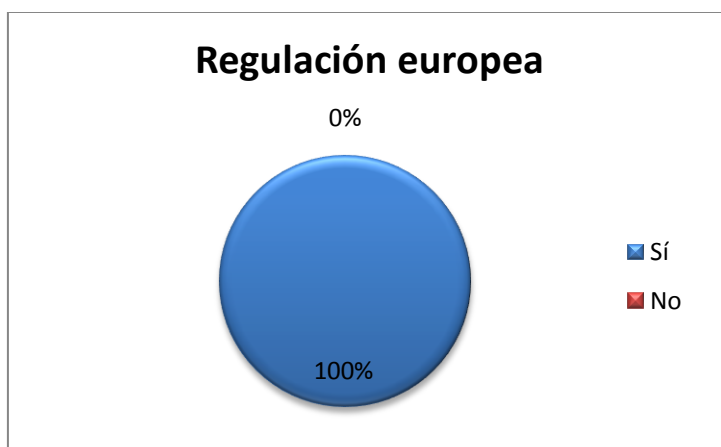
**10. ¿Qué opinión tiene sobre la nueva normativa catalana que prohíbe las intervenciones estéticas, excepto por motivos terapéuticos y siempre que las lleve a cabo un veterinario y bajo condiciones de anestesia?**





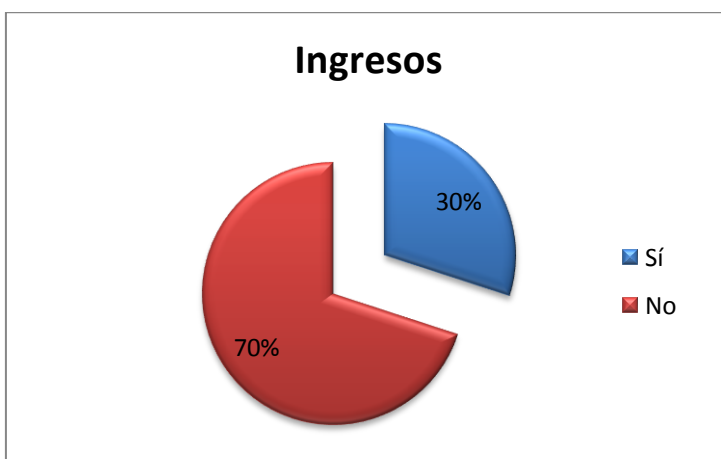
Todos los veterinarios se encuentran a favor del Decreto Legislativo 2/2008 del 15 de abril que prohíbe en Cataluña las amputaciones de cola y recortes de orejas por motivos estéticos o de estándar racial. Aún así algunos veterinarios, aun estar a favor, critican que no se modifiquen otras las leyes más importantes como las que regulan los sacrificios en mataderos o las cacerías que se llevan a cabo en algunos países. Opinan que se deben mejorar aun muchos aspectos de las leyes de protección animal.

**11. ¿Sabía que en otros países de la UE (Alemania e Inglaterra), las intervenciones estéticas llevan reguladas varios años?**



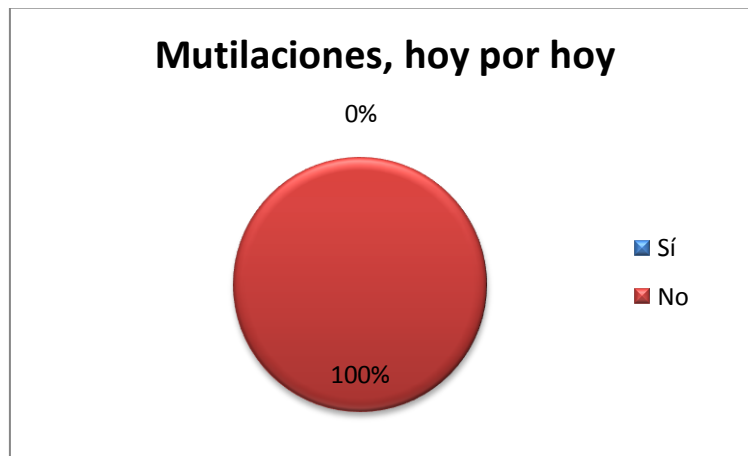
Todos los veterinarios conocían la existencia de leyes europeas que desde hace años prohíben las amputaciones con motivos estéticos, aunque en algunos países es ilegal cortar orejas pero colas no. Además, todos celebran que por fin estas leyes se hayan extendido a España, aunque a unas pocas comunidades autónomas. Lo importante es que las cosas están cambiando y las personas estamos evolucionando y comprendiendo que la estética no es una justificación lógica al corte de orejas y cola, y que estas prácticas están ya desfasadas.

**12. ¿Cree que la prohibición de estas prácticas ha supuesto un aumento de las intervenciones no reguladas y un descenso de los ingresos en las clínicas catalanas?**



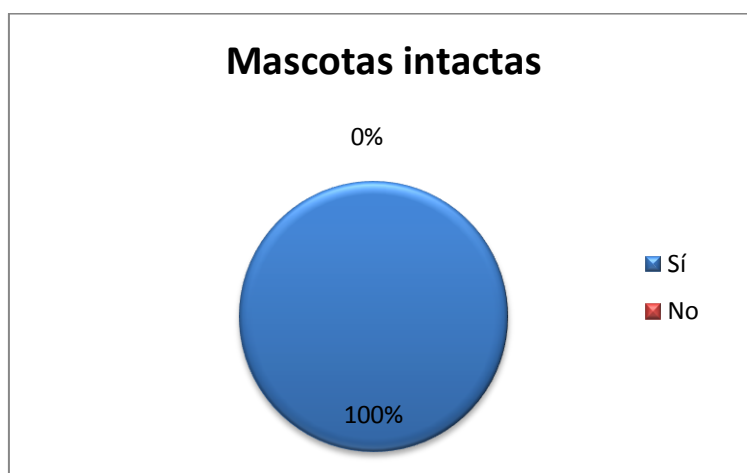
Este balance nos sorprendió ya que esperábamos que nos respondieran que, como consecuencia de la prohibición actual, las intervenciones no reguladas hubiesen experimentado un crecimiento. Pero no fue así. Un 70% opina que no aumentarían las prácticas ilegales ya que quien quiera que le corten las orejas a su perro solo tiene que desplazarse a la comunidad autónoma más cercana donde las amputaciones estéticas no estén reguladas, ya que en Cataluña son muy pocas las clínicas que las practican hoy por hoy. Según su experiencia no ha supuesto una bajada de los ingresos porque, en un hospital o clínica grande estas operaciones representan un porcentaje muy muy bajo del total que se realizan, pero en una pequeña clínica donde se realizaran un gran número de otectomías o caudectomías sí podría suponer una caída de los ingresos.

### 13. ¿Hoy por hoy, seguiría realizando otectomías y caudectomías a pesar de la prohibición legal?



Como esperábamos oír, ninguno de los veterinarios encuestados seguiría haciendo otectomías y caudectomías a pesar de prohibición legal, incluso algunos nos confesaron que esperan que pronto, las leyes de protección animal contra las mutilaciones estéticas se extiendan por toda España. Aunque los sondeos den resultados tan positivos, hemos de tener en cuenta que estamos encuestando a un grupo reducido de veterinarios, ni mucho menos representativo si esta encuesta fuera de carácter oficial, es por eso que no podemos afirmar rotundamente que la aplicación de la ley a nivel de Catalunya sea del 100%.

14. Después de la entrada en vigor de la nueva ley de regulación de las mutilaciones estéticas, ¿ha observado un aumento de clientes reacios a llevar a cabo estas prácticas en sus mascotas?, es decir, ¿ha observado un mayor número de animales intactos?



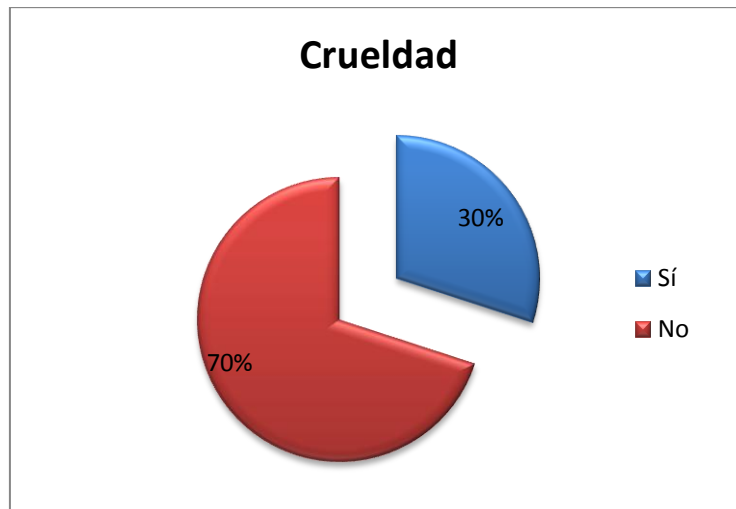
Todos los veterinarios encuestados afirman haber recibido en consulta un mayor número de razas propensas al corte de cola y orejas como Bóxers, Cockers, Dogos, etc. Pero con sus orejas y cola intacta. El aumento de la información sobre estos temas en televisión, internet y revistas de divulgación ha generado una conciencia colectiva que está ayudando a reducir las mutilaciones con fines estéticos.

15. ¿Se ha negado en alguna ocasión a realizar otectomías o caudectomías antes de la entrada en vigor del decreto legislativo 2/2008 del 15 de abril?



El 90% de los veterinarios encuestados nunca se han negado por motivos personales o éticos, a realizar una amputación estética antes de que fuera ilegal en Cataluña. Los cirujanos nos explican que ellos trabajan la carne y el hueso, y las otectomías igual que cualquier extirpación, es una cirugía y no hacen distinciones, porque se trata de su trabajo. Esto desde el punto de vista de la cirugía, aunque es cierto que estas intervenciones siempre han sido criticadas por sus finalidades lucrativas y algunos veterinarios con clínicas privadas se llevan negando desde hace años a practicar cirugía estética canina.

16. ¿Considera estas prácticas un acto de crueldad?



El 70% encuentran que la palabra crueldad es un poco exagerada, pero sí que lo consideran un acto de egoísmo ya que someter a tu mascota a un procedimiento doloroso por gusto, es de ser egoísta y no entender que un perro es un ser vivo que siente y padece dolor. En cambio, los veterinarios que han tenido que atender a aquellos animales mutilados en cuidados intensivos, escuchando sus alaridos toda la noche, sí opinan que se trate de un acto de crueldad.

## **Encuesta a CRIADORES:**

Para participar en la encuesta, los propietarios debían tener mascotas cuya raza presentara un estándar racial con cola amputada u orejas recortadas, ya que la información que nos aportarían encuestas en razas intactas sería poco significativa.

**1. ¿Qué raza/s cría en su centro?**

.....

**2. ¿Realiza corte de colas sistemático?**

Sí.                       No.

**3. ¿Realiza corte orejas sistemático?**

Sí.                       No.

**4. ¿Por qué motivo?**

Estético (gustan más a los propietarios y se venden mejor).

Estándar racial, para perros de competición en concursos de belleza.

Otros. ....

**5. ¿Quién realiza las intervenciones?**

Un veterinario.

El personal del centro.

**6. ¿Cree que el corte de cola y orejas repercute en la venta de cachorros? Es decir, ¿cree que los animales intactos se venden peor?**

Sí.                       No.

**7. ¿Qué grado de dolor cree que experimentan los cachorros?**

Ninguno.

Ligero o moderado.

Significativo.

Severo.

**8. ¿Sabía que en otros países de la UE (Alemania e Inglaterra), las intervenciones estéticas llevan reguladas varios años y ahora también algunas CCAA españolas como Cataluña, Madrid, etc. están reformando sus leyes de protección animal?**

Sí.                       No.

**9. ¿Se ha planteado cambiar la raza por otra con un estándar racial que no requiera el corte de cola y orejas, para así mantenerse al margen de la legislación que lo regula?**

Sí.                       No.

**10. ¿Cree que los problemas legales que tienen algunos centros de cría por cortar colas y orejas, en comunidades donde la legislación es vigente, se resolvería cambiando los estándares raciales por animales intactos?**

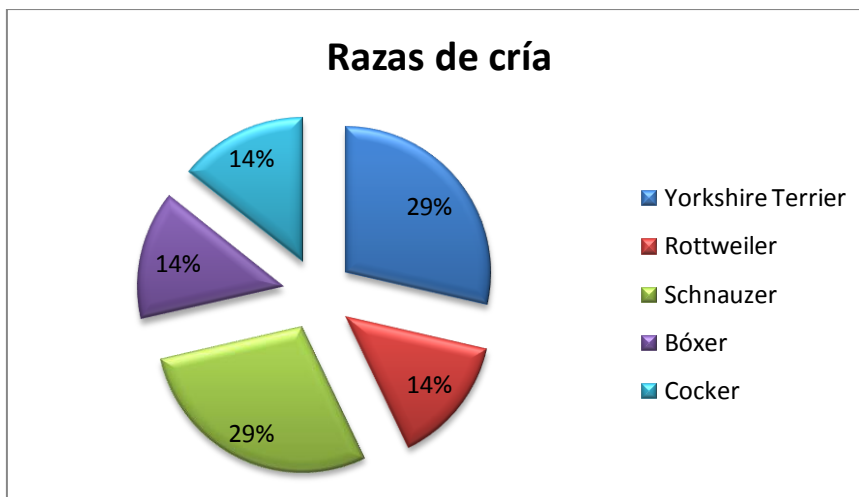
Sí.                       No.

## 6.2.3 BALANCE DE LAS RESPUESTAS OBTENIDAS EN LA ENCUESTA

Grupo: CRIADORES

n = 5

### 1. ¿Qué raza/s cría en su centro?



### 2. ¿Realiza corte de colas sistemático?



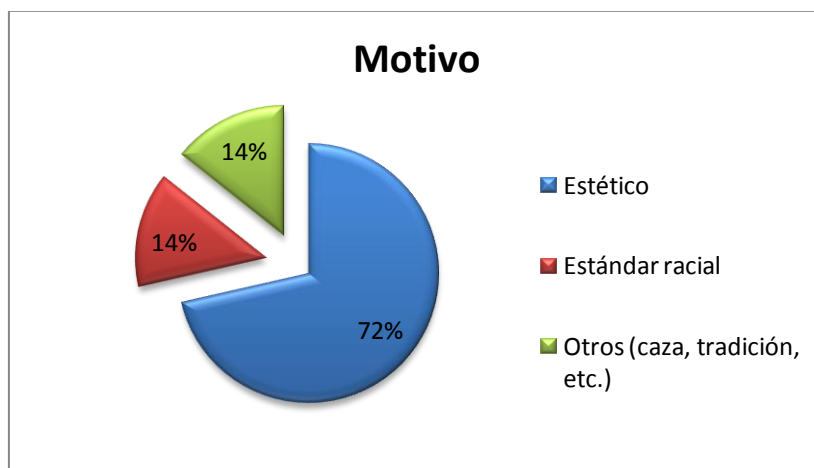
Todos los centros de cría declararon que no realizaban ni cortes de cola ni cortes de oreja. Discrepamos un poco en su respuesta tan rotunda, aunque sabemos que desde la entrada en vigor del decreto legislativo en Cataluña muchos centros han dejado de practicarlas por miedo a demandas.

### 3. ¿Realiza corte orejas sistemático?



Tampoco afirmaron realizar cortes de orejas sistemáticos pero en este caso les otorgamos un voto de confianza porque sabemos que normalmente, las caudectomías las practica el mismo personal del centro, pero en el caso de las otectomías, al tratarse de una cirugía más complicada, no suelen arriesgarse a realizarlas ellos mismos. Se lavan las manos vendiendo los cachorros antes de la edad recomendada para las otectomías y así la responsabilidad legal recae en los propietarios si deciden hacerlas.

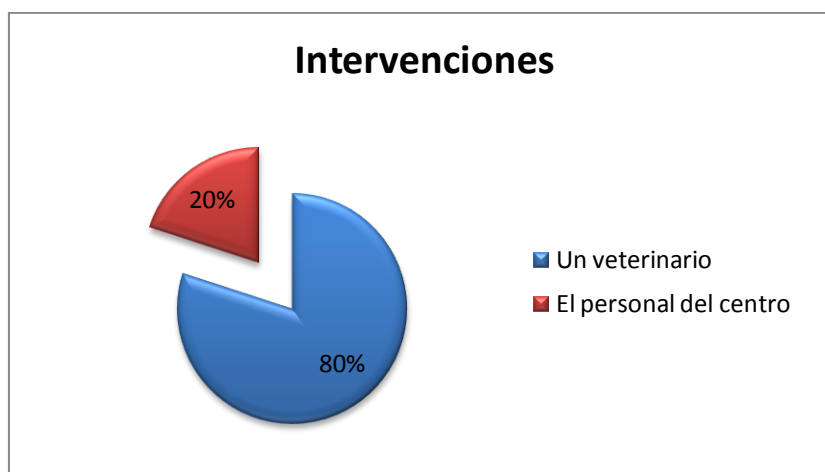
### 4. ¿Por qué motivo?



Los cachorros a la venta en los centros de cría están destinados normalmente a propietarios que adquieren el animal con el fin de ser una mascota, y pocos propietarios están especializados en la cría de ejemplares de categoría. Es por eso que los motivos con los que se realizan las caudectomías son estéticos principalmente porque a los compradores les resultan más bonitos así. Un menor porcentaje de mutilaciones se realizan por exigencias del estándar racial que coincide con el criadero de Yorkshires de competición. Otros centros alegan que cortarles la cola también puede ser una opción recomendable en aquellos animales destinados a la caza o la guarda/defensa.

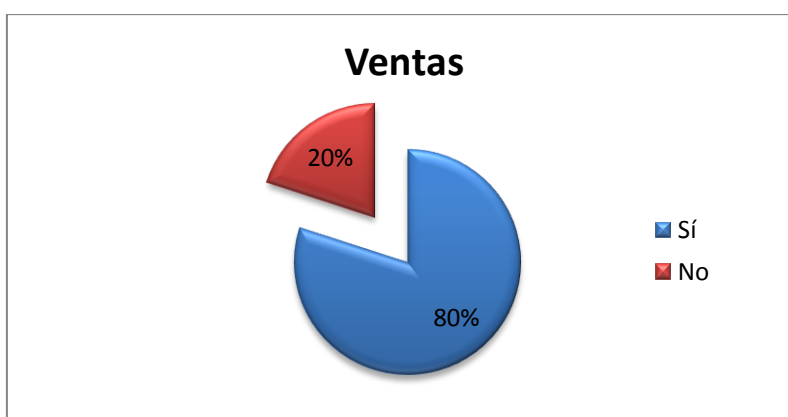


## 5. ¿Quién realiza las intervenciones?



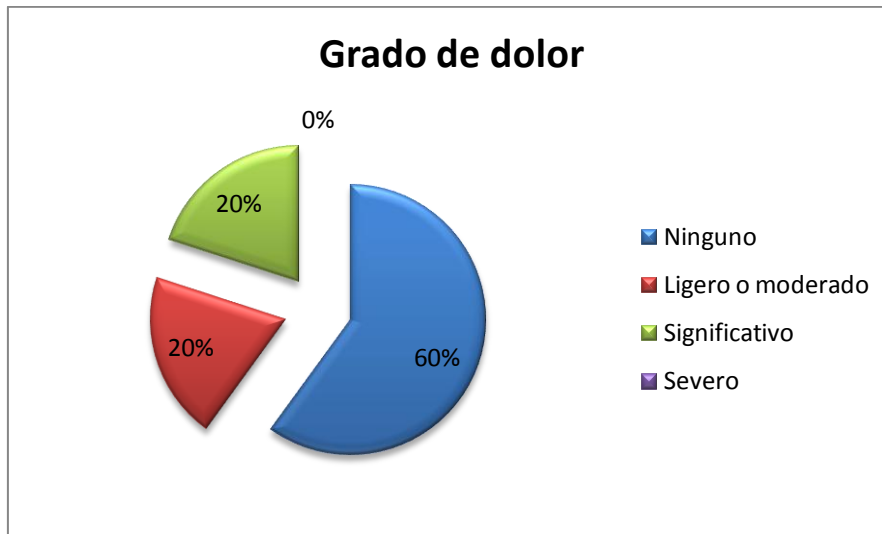
De los centros encuestados solo uno nos confesó que realizaban caudectomías y que las practicaba el mismo personal del centro. Pero el resto de centros de cría nos negaron rotundamente que llevaran a cabo estas prácticas. Alegaron que, en todo caso los perros que se ven mutilados por la calle puede que hayan sido comprados en centros de cría situados en las CCAA que no hay prohibición legal. Algunos nos informaron que antes de la entrada en vigor del decreto legislativo en Cataluña, sí realizaban caudectomías pero ahora que es ilegal ya no se arriesgan, y siempre que tuvieron que realizarlas lo hizo un veterinario.

## 6. ¿Cree que el corte de cola y orejas repercute en la venta de cachorros? Es decir, ¿cree que los animales intactos se venden peor?



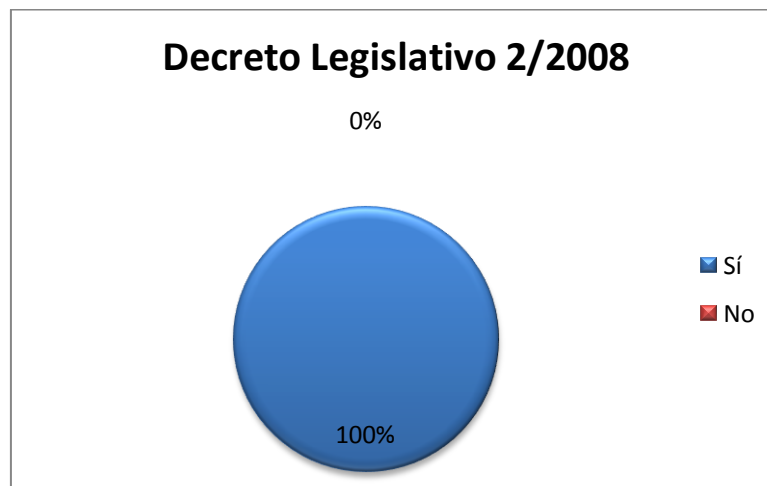
Muchos centros afirman que desde que se prohibió el corte de colas y orejas, los cachorros de sus centros empezaron a venderse peor, porque la gente busca comprar animales con las colas cortadas porque les gustan y así no tienen que buscar ellos un veterinario dispuesto a realizar la intervención. Por el contrario uno de ellos nos dijo que en su centro no se cortaban colas desde hacía muchos años y sus cockers se vendían muy bien.

**7. ¿Qué grado de dolor cree que experimentan los cachorros?**



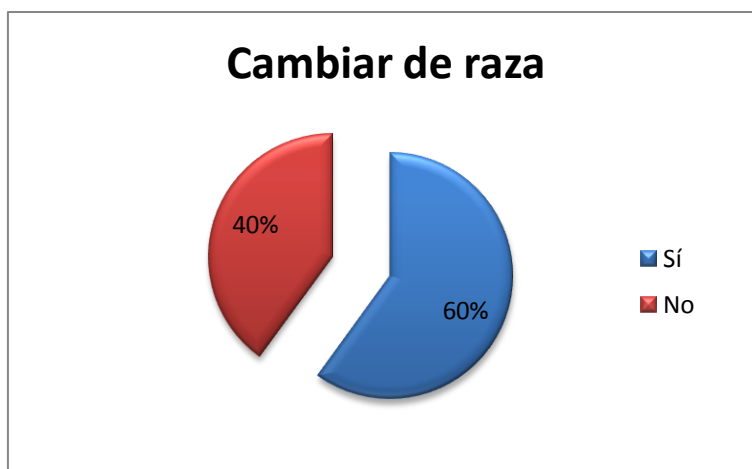
El 60% de los centros encuestados nos afirmaron que desde su experiencia, los cachorros no sufren ningún dolor cuando se les corta la cola, alegando frases que les debió explicar un veterinario como: "al ser tan pequeños no tienen los nervios formados y no sienten dolor". Solo dos de los centros encuestados pensaron que los cachorros sentían algo de dolor incluso significativo, porque "los pobres chillan mucho".

**8. ¿Sabía que en otros países de la UE (Alemania e Inglaterra), las intervenciones estéticas llevan reguladas varios años y ahora también algunas CCAA españolas como Cataluña, Madrid, etc. están reformando sus leyes de protección animal?**



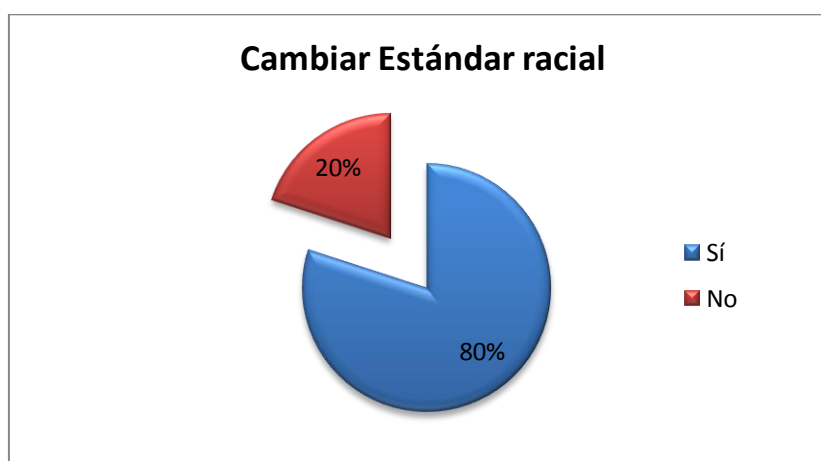
Todos los criadores, como era de esperar, están al tanto de las leyes que regulan los aspectos que afectan a su negocio.

9. ¿Se ha planteado cambiar la raza por otra con un estándar racial que no requiera el corte de cola y orejas, para así mantenerse al margen de la legislación que lo regula?



El 60% de los centros se han planteado cambiar la raza de cría para evitar problemas legales y evitar las bajadas en las ventas, porque ellos consideran que los cachorros intactos se venden peor si su estándar racial dicta orejas y cola amputada. Cambiando a una raza que no precise de amputaciones para asemejarse al ejemplar modelo, se evitan las demandas. Los criadores fieles a una raza, como los Yorkshires de competición o los Bóxers, no se han planteado cambiar de raza por la entrada en vigor del decreto legislativo 2/2008.

10. ¿Cree que los problemas legales que tienen algunos centros de cría por cortar colas y orejas, en comunidades donde la legislación es vigente, se resolvería cambiando los estándares raciales por animales intactos?



La mayoría no cree que sea la solución definitiva pero si un punto a favor para que no se sigan practicando estas intervenciones con el fin de mantener las características de la raza. En uno de los centros nos dijeron que ellos eran plenos defensores por hacer cambiar los estándares raciales y así evitar que se siguieran haciendo las mutilaciones estéticas.

## Encuesta a PROPIETARIOS

Para participar en la encuesta, los propietarios debían tener mascotas cuya raza presentara un estándar racial con cola amputada u orejas recortadas, ya que la información que nos aportarían encuestas en razas intactas sería poco significativa.

### 1. ¿De qué raza es su mascota?

.....

### 2. ¿Por qué motivo lo adquirió?

- Compañía.
- Guardia o defensa.
- Concursos de belleza caninos.

### 3. ¿Conoce su procedencia?

- Tienda de mascotas.
- Criador nacional o extranjero.
- Perrera o protectora.
- Otros (de un particular o regalado).

### 4. ¿Tiene amputada...?

- La cola
- Las orejas
- No le han sido realizadas amputaciones estéticas.

### 5. ¿En caso afirmativo, ¿quién realizó la o las intervenciones?

- Su veterinario.
- Lo adquirió así.

### 6. ¿Por qué motivo decidió realizar estas intervenciones?

- Así lo encuentran más bonito (*se aproxima más al estándar racial*).
- Obtiene una apariencia más agresiva.
- Mascota de competición en concursos de belleza.
- Para evitar lesiones (*en perros de caza, etc.*).

Nunca realizaría mutilaciones estéticas en su mascota.

**7. ¿Sufrió complicaciones tras la intervención?**

No lo sabe, lo adquirió así.

No.

Sí. →

Dolor.

Infecciones.

Resultado antiestético.

Precisó de una segunda intervención.

**8. ¿Le fueron recetados analgésicos al alta?**

Sí, con un tratamiento prolongado (de > 7 días).

Sí, con un tratamiento de pocos días.

No se le recetaron analgésicos.

**9. ¿Volvería a repetir el procedimiento si adquiriera una nueva mascota?**

Sí.                       No.

**10. ¿Qué opinión tiene sobre la nueva normativa española que prohíbe las intervenciones estéticas, excepto por motivos terapéuticos y siempre que las lleve a cabo un veterinario y bajo condiciones de anestesia?**

Totalmente a favor.

Discrepo en algunos aspectos.

Totalmente en contra.

**11. ¿Sabía que en otros países de la UE (Alemania e Inglaterra), las intervenciones estéticas llevan reguladas varios años?**

Sí.                       No.

**12. ¿Consideras un acto de crueldad realizar cortes de cola y orejas en animales con fines estéticos?**

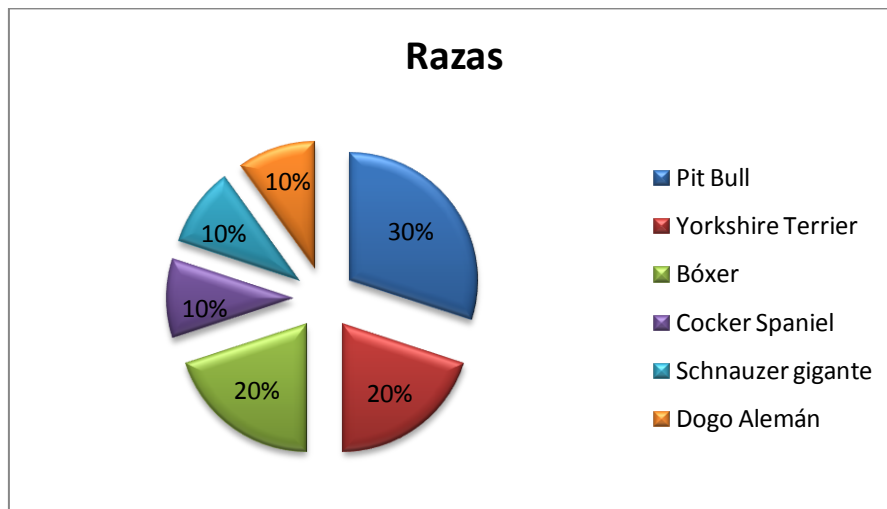
Sí.                       No.

## 6.2.4 BALANCE DE LAS RESPUESTAS OBTENIDAS EN LA ENCUESTA

### Grupo: PROPIETARIOS

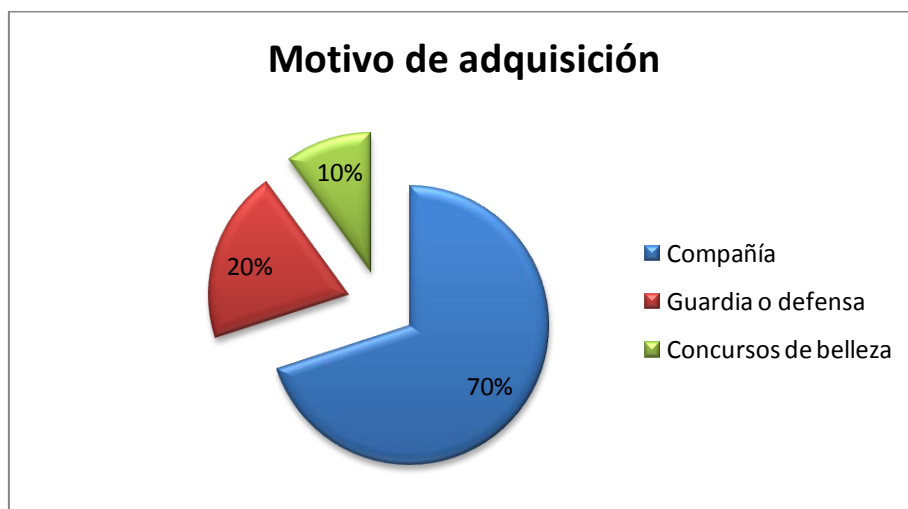
n = 10

#### 1. ¿De qué raza es su mascota?



Todas ellas son razas que tienen estándares raciales con amputaciones estéticas tanto de cola como de orejas, por eso son las mejores candidatas para una encuesta de este tipo.

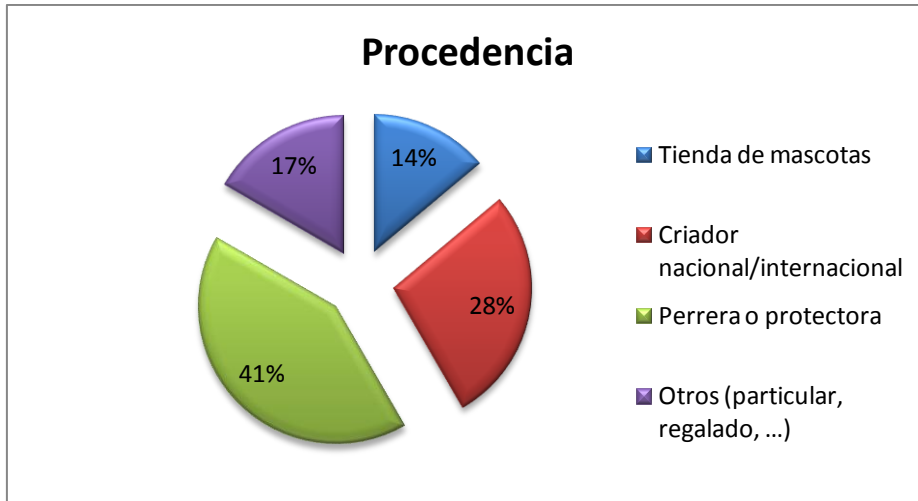
#### 2. ¿Por qué motivo lo adquirió?



La mayoría de personas adquieren un perro como animal de compañía, y aunque es un grupo con menor probabilidad de practicar cuadectomías y otectomías (al menos menor que los animales de guardia y de concurso de belleza) es el grupo más grande y aquí es donde se encuentra el cliente

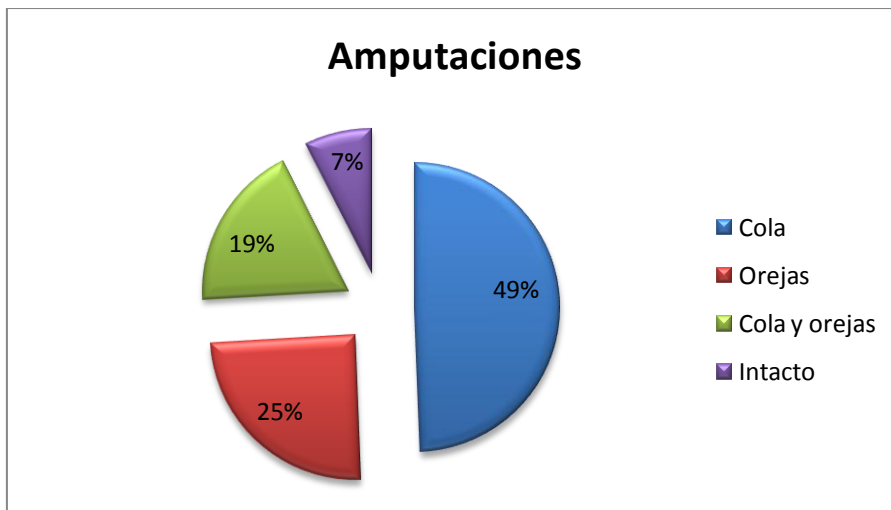
caprichoso que puede desear a toda costa que su perro sea intervenido de cirugía estética y no parará hasta que algún veterinario acceda.

### 3. ¿Conoce su procedencia?



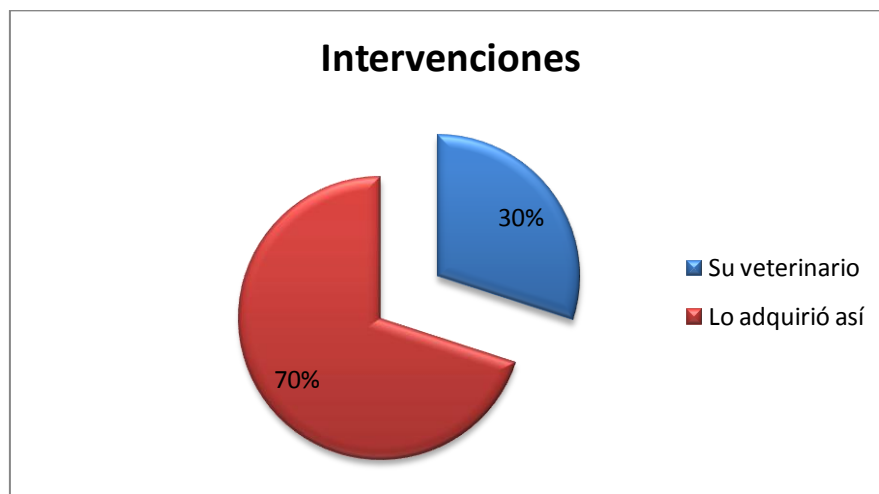
Todos los propietarios encuestados conocían la procedencia de su animal, esto es un punto a favor, significa que nos estamos concienciando de que una mascota es algo más que un objeto, sabemos su procedencia porque nos interesamos y nos importa.

### 4. ¿Tiene amputada...?



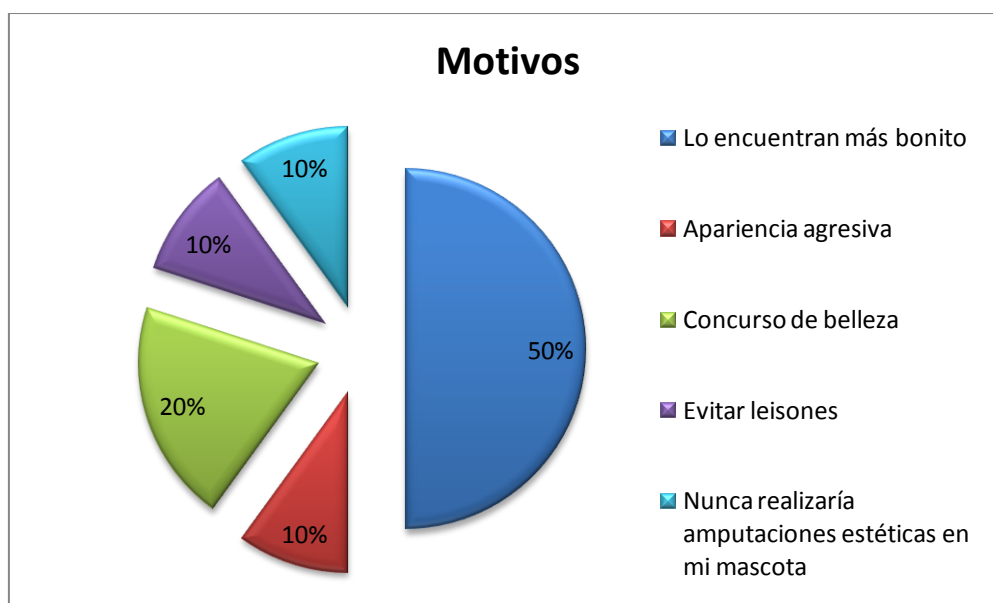
La mitad de los perros encuestados tienen la cola amputada. Lo interesante, si relacionamos esta pregunta con la anterior, es que el 100% de los perros procedentes de perrera, tienda de animales y criadero tienen la caudectomía hecha. Los animales que presentaron cortes de orejas fueron los procedentes de criadero internacional pero también algunos propietarios decidieron hacer la otectomía estética una vez adquirido el cachorro. Solo uno de los propietarios mantiene su mascota intacta en todos los sentidos (estéticos y reproductivos), se trata del Dogo Alemán encuestado.

5. ¿En caso afirmativo, ¿quién realizó la o las intervenciones?



Mirando las encuestas una por una nos damos cuenta de que todos los propietarios que adquirieron su mascota en centros de cría o en tienda tenían la cola cortada. En cambio sólo un 30% acudió a un veterinario para que les fueran practicadas las mutilaciones estéticas una vez adquirido el animal. Estas intervenciones se realizaron antes de la entrada en vigor en Cataluña del decreto legislativo 2/2008 del 15 de abril.

6. ¿Por qué motivo decidió realizar estas intervenciones?

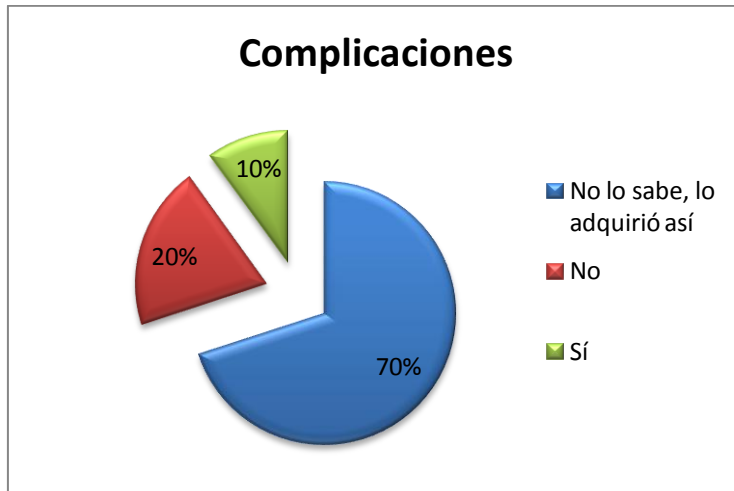


Podemos ver como el sondeo indica que los motivos que llevan a los propietarios a realizar estas intervenciones, sobretudo las otectomías, es por motivos estéticos (50%) ya que creen que estos ejemplares son mucho más bonitos. El 20% lo justifica diciendo que los participantes en concursos de



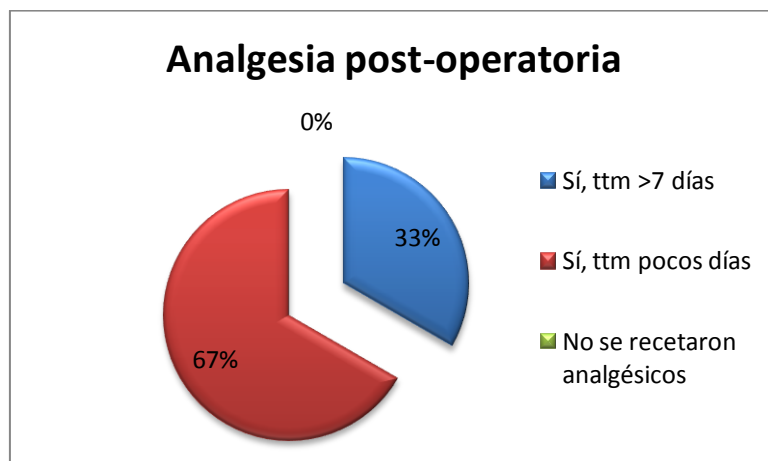
belleza deben tener las amputaciones estéticas realizadas porque si no se les impide competir, cosa que nos ha desmentido parcialmente un juez de concursos de belleza.

**7. ¿Sufrió complicaciones tras la intervención?**



La mayoría de propietarios no saben si su mascota sufrió dolor durante su intervención, ya que los adquirieron así. De los 3 propietarios que acudieron a su veterinario para practicarles las amputaciones estéticas, dos de ellos no padecieron complicaciones pero uno de ellos padeció dolor post-operatorio prolongado, quedó un resultado antiestético porque se las tocó mucho y precisó de una segunda intervención estética para repararlo.

**8. ¿Le fueron recetados analgésicos al alta?**



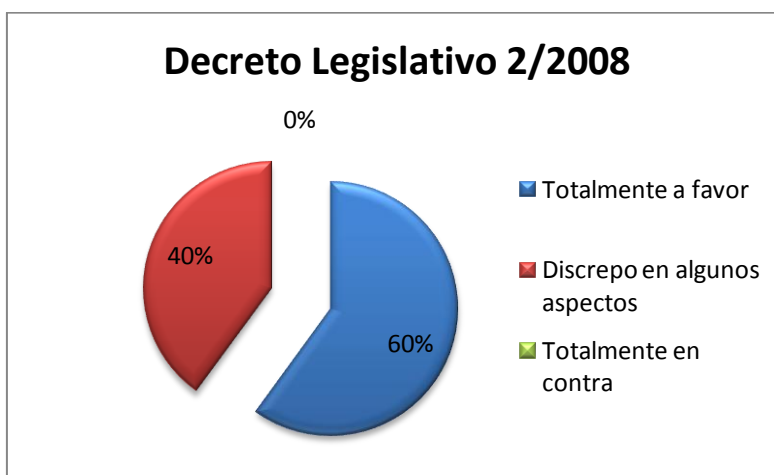
De los 3 animales intervenidos por decisión de sus propietarios (son los únicos que conocen si su mascota a sufrido durante el post-operatorio), solo a 1 se le recetó un tratamiento analgésico superior a 7 días que es lo que se recomienda. Al resto se le administró un tratamiento más corto y quizás insuficiente.

**9. ¿Volvería a repetir el procedimiento si adquiriera una nueva mascota?**



Sorprendentemente un 100% de los propietarios encuestados no volverían a repetir el procedimiento si adquirieran un nuevo cachorro, alegan que no les importa que el perro tenga las orejas caídas y el rabo largo, se compadecen del animal porque no quieren que sufran sin motivo. Dato muy interesante. También recurren a la presión económica que supone una intervención quirúrgica, etc. Contestaron No incluso aquellos propietarios que habían adquirido su mascota con el fin de presentarla a concursos de belleza.

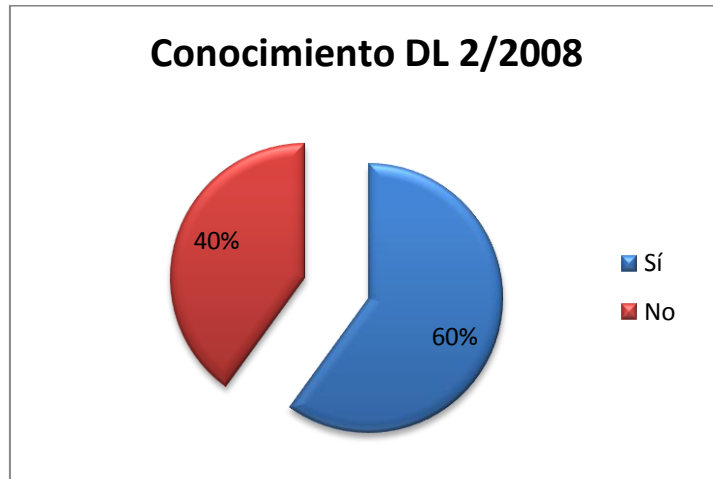
**10. ¿Qué opinión tiene sobre la nueva normativa española que prohíbe las intervenciones estéticas, excepto por motivos terapéuticos y siempre que las lleve a cabo un veterinario y bajo condiciones de anestesia?**



Más de la mitad de los entrevistados se posicionan a favor del decreto legislativo 2/2008 catalán, ya que ven necesario que se regulen estas prácticas para que no se cometan abusos de los animales, aunque si el motivo es terapéutico no dudan en aceptar las otectomías y caudectomías. Entre los encuestados no

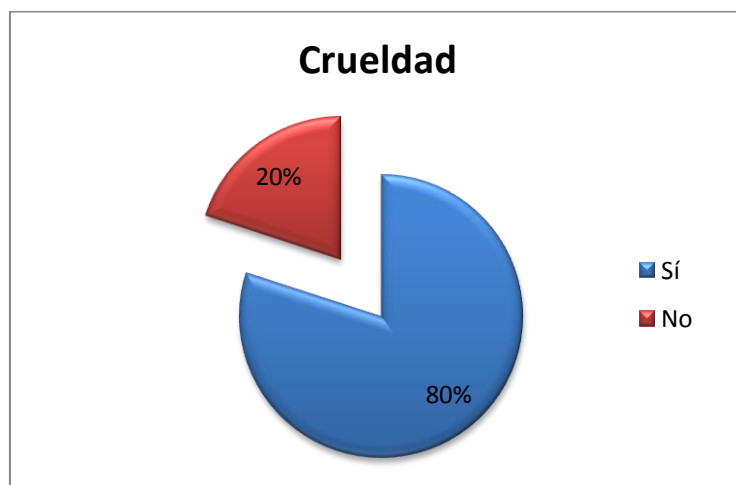
encontramos a nadie que se posiciona totalmente en contra, aunque un 40% discrepa en algunos puntos porque reconocen no conocer del todo los artículos de la legislación.

**11. ¿Sabía que en otros países de la UE (Alemania e Inglaterra), las intervenciones estéticas llevan reguladas varios años?**



En general la gente de a pie tiene un conocimiento de la ley bastante amplio, y sabe que se lleva aplicando en otros países desde hace años, pero casi todo el mundo opina que estas prácticas se continúan llevando a cabo porque si buscas en internet cortar colas y orejas veremos cómo hay anuncios de personas que se ofrecen a realizar estas prácticas. Como siempre, cuando aparece una prohibición con el tiempo aparecen personas que te consiguen lo que quieras a cambio de dinero, lo mismo pasa con las amputaciones.

**12. ¿Consideras un acto de crueldad realizar cortes de cola y orejas en animales con fines estéticos?**



Creemos que por el tipo de pregunta: ¿Lo consideras un acto de crueldad...? Los propietarios encuestados tendieron a contestar que sí por parecer radicales en su postura, pero realmente fueron respuestas poco reflexionadas. Los que contestaron que no, se explicaron diciendo que ellos les habían practicado algún tipo de amputación estética a sus mascotas y tampoco habían padecido tanto y que la palabra crueldad era demasiado exagerada.

## **7. Conclusiones individuales**

*Adriana Llopis:*

Primero de todo quiero decir que la realización de este trabajo me ha servido para conocer todos los aspectos que comprenden en el marco legal la práctica de la caudectomía y la otectomía y conocer cuál es la situación actual. Además el haber utilizado varias publicaciones científicas sobre estas prácticas me han ayudado a orientar y consolidar mi opinión sobre el tema, ya que partía de unos conocimientos muy generales.

Después de haber realizado el trabajo he llegado a una conclusión. La sociedad está en un punto en que su máxima preocupación es el bienestar y por ello cosas como los estándares raciales, la legislación, etc. deberían acompañar este cambio. Si esto no se produce, con el paso del tiempo nos encontraremos con muchas contradicciones e inmersos en una atmósfera de confusión sobre lo que es legal o no, lo que es ético o no, si es compatible con bienestar o no, etc. Aunque en realidad considero que estas situaciones ya están sucediendo.

Considero que la concienciación de la población es un aspecto importante a trabajar. Sin un cambio progresivo y equitativo del modo de pensar de todas las cosas que nos rodean, no puede haber un progreso en la sociedad.

*Claudia Mallo*

Me quedo con el miedo, el desconocimiento, la falta de estudios sobre el tema y las afirmaciones que he tenido que escuchar de bocas de personas que, no saben ni siquiera de lo que hablan. El veterinario no puede hacer su trabajo por miedo, llevar a cabo prácticas que no desea por evitar que otros las lleven a cabo de manera “salvaje”. Un aspecto positivo de este tipo de trabajos es que sirven para darte cuenta de que la sociedad evoluciona, el conocimiento evoluciona, la gente cada día es más consciente y da más importancia al bienestar de los animales, al sufrimiento innecesario de sus mascotas. Pueden estar a favor, o pueden estar en contra de estas prácticas, pero la sociedad empieza a plantearse si realmente estamos actuando de manera correcta. También creo que es importantísimo el papel que tiene el veterinario frente a la sociedad en relación con este tema. Un veterinario tendría que estar obligado, aunque sea moralmente, a concienciar, a informar, a transmitir sus conocimientos

sobre el tema a sus clientes. Una vez lo haya hecho, el cliente podrá decir que sí o que no, pero sabrá lo que está haciendo. Finalmente, animo a los veterinarios a seguir estudiando, a que lleven a cabo estudios sobre el tema ya que todavía hay muchas cosas que se desconocen.

Los humanos tenemos un gran defecto y es que creemos que lo sabemos todo. Cuanto menos sabemos, más creemos que sabemos.

*Yolanda Mancebo:*

Este trabajo lo concluyo con la misma idea con la que escogí el tema y lo desarrollé. La única diferencia es que mi idea, hoy por hoy, está más reafirmada: la práctica de cortes de cola y orejas es una auténtica mutilación innecesaria y no vale fomentarla como una característica propia de la raza animal. Porque se ha de considerar como propio de la raza algo que genéticamente no está determinado para que así lo sea.

Años atrás probablemente este tema era mucho más controvertido, había más gente a favor que en contra. Pero en la actualidad, esta opinión ha dado un giro impresionante y no solo he podido corroborar que esto es cierto mediante las entrevistas a clínicos veterinarios, criadores y propietarios, sino que además solo me ha hecho falta dar un paseo por el parque para ver que gran parte de los perros en los que se ponían en práctica estas técnicas ya no las presentan. Pienso que la sociedad cada día está más concienciada con el tema y enfatizan más con su mascota. Para que realizar una cirugía innecesaria pudiéndoles ahorrar ese sufrimiento. El paro de estas prácticas está avanzando, ahora está en pleno apogeo, y un futuro probablemente se hable de esto como una aberración del pasado.

Resumiendo, no por el mero hecho de que fuera una práctica habitual y rutinaria ha de ser digna y correcta su permanencia. En el desarrollo de este trabajo queda plasmado que este tipo de intervención quirúrgica es totalmente innecesaria e injustificada.

*Rocío Martínez:*

Después de haber escuchado la opinión profesional de veterinarios y los testimonios personales de criaderos y propietarios, sigo pensando de la misma forma respecto a las mutilaciones estéticas.

Encuentro que son unas prácticas ya desfasadas, rebatidas y desmentidas de sobra, que con el tiempo van quedándose cada vez más sin argumentos que las sostengan. Ya no valen los típicos tópicos sobre el estándar racial o las justificaciones infundadas de las que hacen apología aún hoy centros de cría y tiendas de animales de compañía. La mentalidad de la gente de a pie, que al fin y al cabo son los compradores, por fin está evolucionando. La sociedad se está dando cuenta de que ya no les quedan motivos que justifiquen realizar estas prácticas en nuestros animales de compañía, por fin ven la crueldad y el egoísmo que se esconde tras éstas decisiones. Las personas quieren a sus animales y les duele, tal como si se las practicaran a ellos mismos, hacer pasar a su mascota por intervenciones quirúrgicas innecesarias, injustificadas e infundadas, solo por puro interés lucrativo. La cultura está cambiando y todavía hay esperanza.

En resumidas cuentas, la frase más escuchada por los propietarios fue: "Los que cortan orejas y colas a sus perros deberían hacérselo ellos mismos para sentir en sus carnes todo lo que implican estas prácticas".

*Manuel Vega*

Ha dado mucho de sí este trabajo. Demasiadas horas implicados para acabar con más datos de los que barajábamos. Acaba todo siendo una crueldad que por suerte se está empezando a ver con una visión diferente. Empiezan a haber cambios, los grandes países mueven ficha y prohíben estas mutilaciones. Ahora está todo muy reciente pero tiempo al tiempo, cuando esos perros que no puedan ser mutilados se conviertan en los futuros estándares raciales, todo esto se quedará atrás, esperemos. Pero aunque se cambien los estándares quien tiene la última palabra es el propietario, el que sigue las modas y tendencias. Eso quizá será lo difícil del problema de las mutilaciones, hacer ver a un propietario de un dobermann que su perro con las orejas caídas sigue siendo igual que los demás. Pero para eso estamos nosotros.

Realmente he aprendido muchas cosas interesantes, y lo mejor de todo: saber debatir y aportar datos veraces y fiables. La técnica quirúrgica me importa poco, sin embargo saber que comprometes la comunicación del animal o que le predispones a peleas con otros perros sin motivo alguno es mucho más interesante.

## 8. Bibliografía

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*Nuestros agradecimientos van dirigidos a todos los voluntarios que nos regalaron parte de su tiempo respondiendo a las encuestas y las entrevistas, tanto los veterinarios, propietarios, centros de cría y juez de concurso de belleza.*

*Gracias a sus testimonios nos hemos hecho una idea bastante clara de la opinión que se tiene sobre el terreno respecto a las caudectomías y caudectomías en perros.*

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# FEDERATION CYNOLOGIQUE INTERNATIONALE (FCI) (AISBL)

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## REGLAMENTO DE EXPOSICIONES CANINAS DE LA FCI

### INDICE

1. Generalidades
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15. Aplicación del reglamento



1° de enero de 2013

**NB : El masculino genérico se aplica al femenino tanto como el singular puede tener un sentido de plural e vice versa.**

El presente reglamento completa El Reglamento de la FCI, sólo en lo que se refiere a exposiciones caninas en las cuales se pueden conceder «Certificados de Aptitud al Campeonato Internacional de Belleza de la FC» (CACIB) (premios para el título de «Campeón Internacional de Belleza »).

Por estos acontecimientos, la FCI cobra un arancel por cada ejemplar que aparece en el catálogo, cuyo monto es determinado por la Asamblea General de la FCI. Este arancel debe ser pagado al recibir la FCI los catálogos y las listas de CACIB-Res-CACIB de la exposición en cuestión. Debe ser abonado aunque no se haya otorgado ningún premio.

## 1 GENERALIDADES

Los miembros de la FCI, tanto **de pleno derecho** como asociados, deben llevar a cabo, por lo menos, una exposición con CACIB por año.

Las organizaciones caninas nacionales son las únicas responsables en determinar en cuáles exposiciones caninas se podrá competir por el CACIB.

Es tarea de la Secretaría General de la FCI la de confeccionar y publicar el calendario de exposiciones con CACIB.

Las exposiciones que han sido autorizadas por la FCI, deben ser indicadas y designadas de la siguiente manera: "Exposición Canina Internacional con atribución del CACIB de la FCI".

En el catálogo de estas exposiciones, debe aparecer claramente el logotipo de la FCI, junto con la siguiente expresión: "Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI)".

## 2 SOLICITUDES

Las solicitudes para poder otorgar el CACIB en exposiciones internacionales deben ser enviadas a la Secretaría General de la FCI a más tardar doce meses antes de la exposición, o con una antelación no mayor a cuatro años calendarios de la exposición.

## 3 RESTRICCIONES

Sólo se puede otorgar un CACIB **en cada sexo, raza y variedad de raza** (según la nomenclatura de las razas caninas de la FCI), en el mismo día y en el mismo lugar.

No se puede llevar a cabo ninguna **otra** exposición con CACIB, el día en que se lleva a cabo una exposición mundial o de sección, en el mismo continente. **Los casos excepcionales serán tratados por el Comité General.**

Si una exposición debe ser cancelada **por motivos de fuerza mayor**, el organizador debe reembolsar parcialmente los aranceles de inscripción que hayan sido pagados.

La FCI sólo autorizará exposiciones a realizarse el mismo día, a condición de que estos acontecimientos se lleven a cabo con una distancia aérea mínima de 300 km.

En el caso de que la distancia sea inferior a 300 km, se puede dar la autorización a condición de que el organizador que haya enviado su solicitud en primer lugar dé su consentimiento al segundo solicitante. En este caso, se recomienda la división apropiada de los grupos de la FCI (según la nomenclatura de las razas de la FCI), teniendo en cuenta los lugares y los días de las exposiciones.

En las exposiciones con CACIB, una raza debe ser juzgada, si es posible, en un solo día, y todas las razas de un mismo grupo de la FCI también deben ser juzgadas en un solo día. Sin embargo, solo en aquellos casos en que sea necesario por motivos de organización, es posible dividir el juzgamiento de las razas de un mismo grupo en dos días.

Es responsabilidad del Director Ejecutivo de la FCI, la decisión de autorizar el otorgamiento del CACIB en exposiciones internacionales.

#### **4 REQUISITOS ESPECIALES – ADMISIÓN DE PERROS**

El bienestar de los perros debe ser LA PRIORIDAD en cualquier exposición canina.

Los organizadores deben asegurarse de que las únicas razas que puedan ser presentadas sean aquellas para las que la FCI ha aceptado sus estándares de raza (a título definitivo o provisional) y que estén inscritas en el libro de orígenes o en el anexo a dicho libro (registro inicial) de un país miembro de la FCI. **Lo mismo se aplicará** a un país no miembro de la FCI cuyo libro de orígenes es, no obstante, reconocido por la FCI. **Las razas aún no reconocidas por la FCI (ni en forma definitiva ni provisoria), deben estar reconocidas a nivel nacional y tener pedigrís emitidos por una organización canina nacional miembro o socio contratante de la FCI.** Estas razas **no pueden ingresarse en ningún grupo** (tienen que figurar en una sección específica del catálogo llamada “razas no reconocidas por la FCI”) **y** no pueden optar al CACIB, ni a los diferentes títulos de la FCI. **Además,** no pueden competir **en las finales de los “Mejor de Grupo”.** La FCI cobra el arancel habitual por cada perro expuesto **(de dichas razas).**

En todas las exposiciones en las que **se otorga** el CACIB de la FCI, **la división en grupos debe ser de acuerdo con la actual Nomenclatura de Razas de la FCI.** En caso de incumplimiento de esta norma, la FCI reserva el derecho **a rechazar** autorizaciones a otorgar el CACIB en futuras exposiciones internacionales.

Los grupos son los siguientes:

- grupo 1: Perros de Pastor y Perros Boyeros (excepto Perros Boyeros Suizos)
- grupo 2: Perros Tipo Pinscher y Schnauzer - Molosoides y Perros Tipo Montaña y Boyeros Suizos
- grupo 3: Terriers
- grupo 4: Teckels
- grupo 5: Perros Tipo Spitz y Tipo Primitivo
- grupo 6: Perros Tipo Sabueso, Perros de Rastro y Razas Semejantes
- grupo 7: Perros de Muestra
- grupo 8: Perros Cobradores de Caza, Perros Levantadores de Caza y Perros de Agua
- grupo 9: Perros de Compañía
- grupo 10: Lebreles

En todas las exposiciones con pocas inscripciones, los organizadores están autorizados a que se juzguen conjuntamente diferentes grupos en el ring principal, para las competencias de los « mejores de grupo ». Sin embargo, esto no se aplica a las exposiciones mundiales y de sección.

En todas las exposiciones, además de la denominación de la raza en el idioma prevaleciente del país organizador, el cronograma y el catálogo deberían también incluir el país de origen de la raza y ser redactados en uno de los cuatro idiomas de trabajo de la FCI.

Los machos y las hembras deben ser inscriptos en forma separada. La numeración debe comenzar en el número 1 y no será interrumpido **a través del catálogo**. Dentro de la misma raza, la numeración no puede ser interrumpida.

En el catálogo, se pueden publicar los títulos de campeón internacional y nacional que hayan sido homologados así como los títulos oficiales conseguidos en las exposiciones mundiales o de sección de la FCI (Vencedor Mundial, Vencedor Mundial - Joven, **Vencedor Mundial – Veterano**, Vencedor de Sección, Vencedor de Sección - Joven, Vencedor de Sección - **Veterano**). Le corresponde al país que organiza la exposición decidir publicar o no otros títulos en el catálogo.

Los perros enfermos (provisionalmente enfermos o padeciendo de una enfermedad contagiosa) así como las perras amamantando o acompañadas por sus cachorros, deben ser excluidos de toda exposición canina. Las hembras en celo pueden tomar parte en las exposiciones a menos que los reglamentos del comité organizador lo prohíban. Los perros sordos o ciegos no pueden ingresar en una exposición con CACIB. En el caso de que un propietario no observara esta norma y que el juez descubriera que el perro es ciego o sordo, tiene que **echar** al ejemplar **fuera de** la pista.

Los perros que no figuran en el catálogo no pueden ser juzgados, a no ser que hayan surgido **errores** por los cuales el comité organizador es responsable (problemas en el proceso de impresión del catálogo, etc.). **Los formularios de inscripción deben haber sido completamente completados y devueltos a los organizadores antes de la fecha de cierre y las inscripciones deben estar debidamente registradas y abonadas.**

Los perros con la cola o las orejas cortadas deben ser admitidos, de acuerdo con las regulaciones legales de sus países de origen y aquellas del país en el que se lleva a cabo la exposición. El juzgamiento de estos perros, tengan la cola y las orejas cortadas o no, debe ser realizado sin ninguna discriminación y solamente conforme al estándar de raza válido. **Las reglamentaciones del país organizador en relación con exhibir perros con cola u orejas cortadas deberían estar indicadas en el programa de exposición o en el formulario de inscripción así como en las reglamentaciones de exposición.**

**Está prohibido preparar al perro con cualquier sustancia que pueda alterar la estructura, color o forma del pelaje, piel o nariz.** Sólo se permiten el uso del peine y del cepillo, **el arreglo y el corte de pelo.** Está también prohibido dejar al perro atado sobre la mesa de arreglo por más tiempo del que lo exija la preparación del animal.

Se admiten como identificación, tanto los tatuajes como los microchips (estándar ISO).

El comité organizador se reserva el derecho de no aceptar la participación de **un** expositor en la exposición.

## **5 CLASES**

No se permite inscribir a un perro en dos clases y tampoco se aceptan las inscripciones posteriores a la fecha de cierre.

**Las competencias o exposiciones – nacionales o internacionales, adicionales organizadas por clubes de la misma organización canina nacional que el club que organiza la exposición con CACIB, están permitidas dentro del mismo predio, cuando es aceptado por el organizador de la exposición con CACIB.**

**La fecha decisiva para la edad es el día en que se exhibe el perro.**



En las exposiciones con CACIB autorizadas por la FCI, sólo se autorizan las clases siguientes:

**a. Clases en las que se puede otorgar el CACIB**

* Clase intermedia	(de 15 a 24 meses)	obligatoria
* Clase abierta	(a partir de 15 meses)	obligatoria
* Clase trabajo	(a partir de 15 meses)	obligatoria
* Clase campeones	(a partir de 15 meses)	obligatoria

**Clase Trabajo**

Para inscribir a un perro en la clase trabajo, el formulario de inscripción debe ser acompañado con una copia del certificado obligatorio de la FCI, **WCC (Working Class Certificate)**, conteniendo la confirmación del país miembro en el cual el propietario/tenedor posee su residencia **legal**, que el perro ha aprobado una prueba **apropiada** así como los detalles de la prueba.

Las únicas razas que podrán inscribirse en clase trabajo son las que aparecen como razas de trabajo en la nomenclatura de la FCI, tomando en cuenta las excepciones otorgadas a ciertos países para ciertas razas.

**Clase Campeones**

Para inscribir a un perro en la clase campeones, es imprescindible que uno de los títulos detallados a continuación haya sido homologado a más tardar el día de cierre oficial de inscripción. Se debe adjuntar una copia del título al formulario de inscripción.

- Campeón Internacional **de Belleza de la FCI (CIB)**
- **Campeón Internacional de Exposición de la FCI (CIE)**
- Campeón Nacional **de Belleza de un país miembro de la FCI (con por lo menos 2 CAC de este mismo país)**
- **Campeón Nacional de Exposición de un país de la FCI**
- **Campeón Nacional de Belleza de un país no miembro de la FCI que haya firmado una carta de cooperación con la FCI**
- **Campeón de Exposición Nacional de un país no miembro de la FCI que haya firmado una carta de cooperación con la FCI**

**Una vez cerrado el período de inscripción e impreso el catálogo**, está prohibido transferir un perro de una clase a otra a no ser que el problema se deba a un error **administrativo del comité organizador**.

**b. Clases en las cuales no puede otorgarse el CACIB:**

- Clase Bebés (correctamente vacunados, hasta 6 meses)	opcional
- Clase Cachorros (de 6 a 9 meses)	opcional
- Clase Jóvenes (de 9 a 18 meses)	obligatoria
- Clase Veteranos (a partir de 8 años)	obligatoria

**c. Concurso opcional de Mejor de Sexo**

Debe incluir por lo menos el mejor joven, el vencedor de CACIB y el mejor veterano. El juez ubica a los ejemplares exhibidos en orden de calidad sin tener en cuenta de que clase vienen.

**d. Grupos/concursos facultativos**

Para ser inscrito en estos **grupos**/concursos, el perro tiene que competir también, a título individual, en una de las clases obligatorias.

- **Grupo**/concurso de parejas: un macho y una hembra de la misma raza y de la misma variedad, perteneciendo al mismo propietario.
- Concurso de Grupo de Reproductores: un mínimo de tres y máximo de cinco ejemplares de las mismas raza y variedad independientemente del sexo, criados por la misma persona (mismo afijo) aunque dicha persona no sea la propietaria.
- Concurso de Grupo de Progenie: un macho o una hembra acompañados de un mínimo de tres y máximo cinco cachorros suyos (primera generación, es decir hijo o hija).

Estos **grupos**/concursos facultativos tendrán lugar, preferentemente, en las pistas donde se juzgan las razas. **El juez de raza elige al mejor grupo y solo éste será permitido en el ring de honor.**

## **6 CALIFICACIONES Y CLASIFICACIÓN**

Las calificaciones otorgadas por los jueces deben cumplir con las siguientes definiciones:

**EXCELENTE** – sólo puede ser atribuido a un perro muy cercano al estándar ideal de la raza, que se presente en excelente forma, exhibiendo un temperamento armonioso, equilibrado, que sea de clase superior y tenga excelente actitud. Sus características superiores en relación a su raza permiten que imperfecciones menores puedan ser ignoradas. Sin embargo, deberá poseer las características típicas de su sexo.

**MUY BUENO** -sólo puede ser atribuido a un perro que posea las características típicas de su raza, que sea equilibrado en sus proporciones y que éste en correcta condición. Pueden **tolerarse** unas faltas menores. Este premio sólo puede ser otorgado a un perro que muestre clase.

**BUENO** – se atribuye a un perro que posee las características principales de su raza. **Los puntos buenos deberían superar las faltas para que el ejemplar pueda ser considerado un buen representante de su raza.**

**SUFICIENTE** – debe ser otorgado a un perro que corresponda **suficientemente** a su raza, sin poseer las características generalmente aceptadas, o cuya condición física deje algo que desear.

**DESCALIFICADO** – debe ser otorgado a un perro que no corresponda al tipo requerido por el estándar, que exhiba un comportamiento claramente distinto al del estándar o tenga conducta agresiva, que tenga anomalías testiculares, que tenga defectos dentales o anomalías maxilares, que exhiba **un color o estructura de pelaje que no esté de acuerdo con el estándar de raza** o que muestre claramente signos de albinismo.

Esta calificación también se otorgará a los perros que apenas correspondan a una sola característica de la raza, de modo tal que su salud se vea amenazada. Tiene que otorgarse también a perros que presenten faltas **descalificantes** en relación al estándar de la raza. **El motivo por el cual el ejemplar fue DESCALIFICADO debe figurar en el informe del juez.**

Los perros que no puedan recibir una de las calificaciones arriba mencionadas, serán retirados del ring con:

**NO PUEDE SER JUZGADO** – esta valoración se atribuye a cualquier perro que no se mueva, **que sea rengo**, que constantemente salte sobre su guía o trate de salir de el ring, lo que hace imposible evaluar el desplazamiento y el movimiento, o si un perro evita constantemente que el juez lo examine, y hace imposible el inspeccionar la mordida y los dientes, la anatomía y la estructura, la cola o los testículos, o si pueden ser observados los vestigios de operaciones o tratamientos que parezcan hechos con la intención de provocar un posible engaño. Lo mismo se aplica si el juez tiene amplias razones como para sospechar de operaciones hechas con la intención de corregir la característica o condición original (v.g. párpado, oreja, cola). La razón por la que el perro recibió un NO PUEDE SER JUZGADO tiene que ser asentada en el informe del juez.

Los cuatro mejores perros de cada clase son clasificados, siempre que hayan recibido al menos la calificación «MUY BUENO».

## 7 TITULOS, PREMIOS Y CONCURSOS EN EL RING DE HONOR

### **CACIB: Certificat d’Aptitude au Championnat International de Beauté de la FCI**

Los únicos perros que pueden ser considerados para el CACIB son aquellos que han sido premiados con un « 1ro. Excelente » **en categoría intermedia, abierta, trabajo y campeón**. Sólo se puede conceder un CACIB si se considera al perro en cuestión como un ejemplar de calidad superior. El CACIB no se otorga automática y obligatoriamente al “1ro. Excelente”.

Se otorga la Reserva de CACIB al segundo mejor perro que haya obtenido la calificación « Excelente » de las categorías arriba mencionadas. **El ejemplar ubicado en segundo lugar en la categoría de la cual proviene el vencedor del CACIB, puede competir por la Reserva de CACIB, si se le otorgó “excelente”**. No es obligatorio otorgar la Reserva de CACIB.

El juez concede los CACIB y Reserva de CACIB según la calidad de los perros, sin verificar si cumplen con los requisitos de edad y/o inscripción en libros de orígenes reconocidos por la FCI.

El CAC (Certificat d’Aptitude au Championnat) es un premio nacional cuyo otorgamiento depende de las organizaciones caninas nacionales. Les corresponde a dichas organizaciones decidir en qué clases y a qué perros se puede conceder este certificado. El hecho de ganar CAC’s permite conseguir el título de Campeón nacional.

**El primer título de Campeón Nacional obtenido en un país de la FCI debe ser con al menos 2 CACs ganados en exposiciones organizadas por la misma OCN en el mismo país en dos días diferentes.**

Para cada sexo y cada raza, le corresponde a un solo juez otorgar todos los premios, CACIB incluido. Se nombrará a este juez de antemano.

### **Mejor de Raza (BOB) y Mejor Sexo Opuesto (BOS)**

**El mejor joven, el vencedor de CACIB y mejor veterano de ambos sexos, si se les otorgara “excelente”, competirán por Mejor de Raza (BOB). El juez debe también elegir el mejor ejemplar del sexo opuesto (BOS), al lado del vencedor de BOB.**

**Opcional (en caso de que se lleve a cabo un concurso de Mejor de Sexo): el mejor macho y la mejor hembra del concurso Mejor de Sexo compiten por Mejor de Raza (BOB) y Mejor Sexo Opuesto (BOS).**

Los perros de razas que no están reconocidas a título definitivo sino provisional no pueden optar al CACIB pero pueden competir por el Mejor de Raza, Mejor de Grupo y Mejor Perro de la Exposición. **Estas razas pueden también competir por los diferentes títulos de la FCI.**

### **Competencias en el ring de honor:**

Los concursos de Mejor de la Exposición, Mejor de Grupo, Grupo de Reproductores, Grupo de Progenie, Parejas, Mejor Veterano, Mejor Joven, Mejor Puppy, **Mejor Bebé** y Junior Handling deben ser juzgados por un solo juez, nombrado de antemano. **Para hacer las competencias en el ring de honor más eficientes, el juez debería prejuzgar los ejemplares o grupos en una pista separada con tiempo suficiente antes de que ingresen al ring de honor para que, luego de observar los ejemplares ingresar al ring de honor, pueda rápidamente elegir los semifinalistas o finalistas que necesitarán una mirada más cercana.**

Los únicos jueces que pueden **oficiar en estas competencias** son aquellos que hayan sido autorizados para hacerlo por sus respectivas organizaciones caninas nacionales.

**Si un perro se muestra agresivo en la pista (raza-grupo-finales) y que su comportamiento está observado por el juez que oficia, debe entregar un informe al comité organizador y debe descalificar el perro para el resto de la competición. Todos los premios y títulos del día deben ser cancelados.**

## **8 HOMOLOGACIÓN DEL CACIB**

Los jueces designados serán los que realicen las propuestas de CACIB. La homologación definitiva debe ser **hecha** por la FCI.

Le corresponde a la Secretaría de la FCI verificar que los perros propuestos cumplen con los requisitos **establecidos** para la homologación del CACIB.

Las tarjetas entregadas a los expositores en las exposiciones representan la prueba de que el perro correspondiente ha sido propuesto para el CACIB. Deben llevar la siguiente expresión: «a reserva de homologación por la FCI».

La secretaria general de la FCI debe asegurarse de que los CACIB han sido correctamente otorgados. A más tardar tres meses después de la exposición, los organizadores deben enviar dos copias del catálogo y de las listas de perros propuestos para el CACIB y Reserva de CACIB **a la Secretaría General de la FCI.**

Estas listas deberán incluir la siguiente información:

Número de catálogo, nombre del perro, libro de origen y número de registro en el libro de origen, sexo, raza y variedad, fecha de nacimiento, nombre del propietario, nombre del juez y clase en la que se otorgó el CACIB.

Las razas serán listadas de acuerdo con **su** denominación en **uno de los cuatro idiomas de trabajo de la FCI**, seguida de la denominación normalmente utilizada en el país donde se celebra la exposición.

Si un perro no es incluido en la lista de CACIB (por ejemplo, por omisión de los organizadores), la tarjeta de propuesta puede ser aceptada como prueba con tal que ningún perro de la misma raza y mismo sexo esté ya en la lista.

## 9 JUECES

Sólo el juez actuante está autorizado a tomar decisiones sobre la atribución del CACIB, la clasificación y la calificación. En este sentido, está obligado a hacerlo sin ninguna ayuda externa y/o interferencia por parte de persona alguna.

**La evaluación** y el juzgamiento de los perros sólo pueden ser llevados a cabo por jueces autorizados por sus organizaciones nacionales a juzgar las razas correspondientes. Durante el juzgamiento, están obligados a juzgar única y estrictamente de acuerdo con el estándar de raza FCI vigente en el momento de la exposición.

Los jueces de países que no son miembros de la FCI sólo pueden juzgar en exposiciones de la FCI si la organización nacional a la que pertenecen está vinculada con la FCI a través de un acuerdo contractual o **gentleman's agreement**. Estos jueces pueden juzgar en exposiciones de la FCI, siempre y cuando sus nombres estén incluidos en la lista oficial de **su** organización canina nacional.

También se aplica lo siguiente:

- a. Todos los jueces de países que no son miembros de la FCI, cuando son invitados a juzgar en una exposición de la FCI, deben completar el cuestionario estandarizado expedido por la FCI. Debe ser enviado a ellos a su debido tiempo y devuelto firmado para su aprobación.
- b. Le corresponde a la organización nacional del país en el cual un juez de un país que no es miembro de la FCI está comprometido para juzgar, verificar la validez de la información contenida en el cuestionario.
- c. Bajo toda circunstancia, todos los jueces, incluyendo aquellos jueces de países que no son miembros de la FCI, deben seguir los estándares de raza de la FCI cuando están juzgando en exposiciones que han sido autorizadas por la FCI. Los estándares de la FCI para las razas que juzgarán jueces que no son de países miembros de la FCI, les deben ser enviados por la organización que los ha invitado con bastante tiempo antes del evento.
- d. Cuando ofician en exposiciones de la FCI, los jueces de países que no son miembros de la FCI sólo pueden juzgar las razas reconocidas por su organización canina nacional **incluso si se encuentran en la lista de jueces para todas las razas de su propia OCN.**

- e. Los jueces de países que no son miembros de la FCI deben ser informados por completo, con antelación y en detalle, acerca del reglamento de exposiciones de la FCI, así como acerca de otras regulaciones y cuestiones de procedimiento importantes. Es responsabilidad del **organizador de la exposición** del país donde la exposición se realiza, la de proveer la información **necesaria** a estos jueces.

## 10 DEBERES DE LOS ORGANIZADORES

Los comités organizadores deben conocer el reglamento de jueces de exposiciones de la FCI y el **Reglamento de Exposiciones Caninas de la FCI** y deben respetarlo.

La FCI no puede ser considerada como responsable de cualquier incidente que se produzca en el marco de una exposición internacional. Un seguro en responsabilidad civil debe ser contratado por los organizadores.

### INVITACIONES A JUZGAR

- a. Los organizadores **deben** enviar una invitación escrita al juez. El juez está obligado a informar, por escrito, a los organizadores si acepta o rechaza la invitación. Siempre debiera cumplir con sus obligaciones para actuar como juez, a no ser que no pueda por una razón importante.
- b. Si debido a una razón importante, un juez no puede cumplir con sus obligaciones, el organizador de la exposición debe ser inmediatamente informado por teléfono, fax o email. La cancelación debe ser confirmada por carta.
- c. De la misma manera, los organizadores están obligados a mantener sus invitaciones. Sólo se permite la cancelación en caso de fuerza mayor o en caso de acuerdo mutuo con el juez.
- d. Si los organizadores se ven forzados a cancelar el evento o la invitación de juzgamiento a un juez en particular, están obligados a rembolsar al juez por los gastos que ya hayan sido realizados. Si por cualquier razón que no sea de fuerza mayor, un juez no puede cumplir con sus obligaciones para officiar como juez, está obligado a pagar los gastos suplementarios que puedan haberse ocasionado ya.
- e. Se les recomienda a los jueces contratar un seguro de viaje (cancelación de vuelo, accidentes, etc.) cuando están invitados a juzgar en el extranjero.
- f. Si un juez es invitado a juzgar una raza reconocida únicamente a nivel nacional, debe haber recibido con antelación suficiente tanto la autorización según el reglamento de jueces de exposiciones de su propia OCN, como el estándar por parte del organizador.

- g. En todas las exposiciones internacionales de la FCI, 2/3 como mínimo de los jueces invitados deben ser jueces de la FCI (raza-grupo-todas las razas) aprobados por una OCN miembro de la FCI. **Si el organizador necesita a sólo dos jueces, ambos deberían estar aprobados por su organización canina nacional de la FCI.**
- h. **Los jueces de raza de la FCI de los miembros de pleno derecho de la FCI necesitarán confirmación antes del evento por su organización canina nacional para juzgar razas y/o competencias finales en el ring de honor en el extranjero al menos que la organización canina nacional en donde tienen su residencia legal tenga sus jueces enumerados en la Guía de Jueces de la FCI (sin ninguna restricción en esta Guía acerca de estos jueces).** Los jueces de grupo de la FCI que son de OCN miembros **de pleno derecho** de la FCI están autorizados a juzgar, sin permiso previo de su OCN, todas las razas del / de los grupo(s) para lo(s) cual(es) tienen licencia así como el Mejor de Grupo para el (los) grupo(s) para lo(s) cual(es) tienen licencia. Pueden juzgar el « mejor de la exposición » (BIS) a condición de que la OCN que los haya invitado esté de acuerdo, que sean calificados como juez de grupo de la FCI para al menos dos grupos de la FCI y que su OCN les hayan autorizado a juzgar este tipo de competición.
- i. Los jueces internacionales para todas las razas de la FCI que son de OCN miembros **de pleno derecho** de la FCI están autorizados a juzgar, sin permiso previo de su OCN, cualquier raza y cualquier competencia, incluyendo el Mejor de la Exposición y los Mejores de Grupo.
- j. **Los jueces nacionales para todas las razas de la FCI de miembros de pleno derecho de la FCI con menos de 100 razas registradas, están sólo autorizados a juzgar las razas reconocidas por su organización canina nacional. Los jueces nacionales para todas las razas de la FCI deben tener autorización de su organización canina nacional al menos que el juez esté registrado en la Guía de Jueces de la FCI.**

## **RAZAS A JUZGAR**

Un juez debe ser informado **de antemano** sobre las razas y cantidad de perros que tiene asignados para juzgar así como también sus tareas en el ring de honor. Es responsabilidad del organizador de la exposición la de proveer esta información al juez, por adelantado y por escrito.



Un juez no debería juzgar más de unos 20 perros por hora y un máximo de 80 perros por día si el organizador le pide un informe escrito individual por cada perro. No debería juzgar más de 150 perros por día si no se le exige ningún informe escrito individual. **En casos de fuerza mayor, por ejemplo cancelación a último minuto de jueces por enfermedad, condiciones climáticas, etc., estas cifras pueden extenderse a 100 y 200 con o sin informe escrito. En estas situaciones, deber existir un acuerdo mutuo entre el organizador y el juez y se le debería suministrar al juez un asistente y secretarios de pista con mucha experiencia y asistentes. Si se le solicita al juez que juzgue más de 100 ejemplares, el juzgamiento debería ser hecho sin informe escrito.**

## **DERECHOS DE LOS JUECES**

Los derechos de los jueces invitados a exposiciones internacionales de la FCI fuera de su país de residencia son los siguientes:

- a. La organización de la exposición o el club anfitrión, debe velar por el juez, conforme a un convenio previo, desde el momento de su llegada al país en el que va a juzgar hasta el momento de su salida; normalmente, esto incluye el día anterior y el día posterior a la exposición en la que oficia como juez.
- b. El juez (durante su estancia en calidad de juez) debe ser alojado en un lugar adecuado, su estancia puede incluir la noche anterior y la noche posterior al evento, según su plan de vuelo.
- c. Los jueces tienen libertad para realizar acuerdos privados con los organizadores de exposiciones, los cuales pueden diferir de aquellos estipulados en el “Anexo al Reglamento de Exposiciones y de Jueces de la Fédération Cynologique”. No obstante, cuando no se hayan efectuado tales acuerdos personales, **los jueces deben recibir los beneficios otorgados por este anexo.**
- d. Es aconsejable que las disposiciones financieras sean puestas, de antemano, por escrito en un contrato o una convención entre el juez y el organizador de la exposición. Este contrato deberá ser respetado por ambas partes.

## **GESTIÓN DE LAS PISTAS Y ASISTENTES**

Las razas miniaturas y algunas razas pequeñas tienen que ser examinadas sobre una mesa facilitada por los organizadores.

El juez es el responsable del ring. **Cuando ocurren problemas en la organización, se debe consultar al secretario principal de pista, y las decisiones se toman de acuerdo con el juez.**

Para facilitar la organización en el ring, un secretario de ring **y un asistente (encargado de la papelería)** deberían estar a la disposición del juez. Estos asistentes así como el **secretario principal de pista** deben hablar uno de los idiomas de trabajo de la FCI, determinado por el juez.

**Los secretarios y los asistentes encargados de la papelería** deben ser proporcionados por el comité organizador.

**El secretario de pista debe tener un buen conocimiento del reglamento de exposiciones de la FCI así como de las reglas de exposición del país donde se lleva a cabo la exposición. Las organizaciones caninas nacionales deberían organizar capacitación especial y un sistema de autorización para secretarios de pista y asistentes.**

El secretario **y el asistente encargado de la papelería** deben proveer los siguientes servicios al juez:

- reunir los perros por clases;
- verificar los perros ausentes dentro de cada clase.
- notificar al juez sobre cualquier cambio de guía o ingreso irregular;
- **en prioridad, redactar el informe del juez –cuando es requerido– en el idioma elegido por él (y comunicado de antemano al organizador de la exposición) para que el juez entienda lo que está escrito. Si es necesario, debería hacerse traducción de los informes afuera de la pista en un área especial para traducción;**
- organizar toda la papelería de trabajo necesaria y la distribución de los premios;
- seguir todas las instrucciones del juez.

## **11 RESTRICCIONES PARA LOS JUECES EN EXPOSICIONES**

- **Un juez nunca debe llegar tarde a un compromiso o dejar el predio de la exposición antes de que haya terminado completamente con las obligaciones que le fueron asignadas.**
- **Un juez no puede criticar el trabajo de otro juez.**
- **Bajo ninguna circunstancia puede un juez solicitar invitaciones para juzgar.**
- **Un juez no puede consultar el catálogo de la exposición antes o durante su juzgamiento.**
- **En la pista, un juez debe comportarse correctamente y examinar todos los perros sin discriminación. Debe vestirse sobria y correctamente, en relación con la tarea que debe realizar. Debe actuar correcta y cortésmente.**
- Un juez no puede fumar en el ring.
- Un juez no puede consumir bebidas alcohólicas en el ring.

- Un juez no puede utilizar un teléfono celular en el ring cuando está juzgando.
- Un juez no puede ni ingresar ni guiar un perro en una exposición en la que oficia como juez.
- Un socio, **cualquier** miembro de su familia inmediata o cualquier persona que viva con **el juez** en su hogar, puede ingresar y guiar cualquier perro que pertenezca a **cualquier** raza que el juez no juzga en ese día de la exposición.
- Los perros que el juez guía en una exposición con CACIB en la cual no está actuando como juez, deben ser **de su propia cría, de la cría de un socio suyo, de la cría de un miembro de su familia inmediata o de la de cualquier persona que viva con él en su hogar. Otra posibilidad es que deban ser de su (co)-propiedad, de la (co)-propiedad de un socio suyo, de la (co)-propiedad de un miembro de su familia inmediata o de la de cualquier persona que viva con él en su hogar.**
- **Un juez no puede juzgar ningún perro del que él, un socio suyo, un miembro de su familia inmediata o cualquier persona que viva con él en su hogar ha sido (co)-propietario durante los seis meses antes de la exposición. Lo mismo se aplica si una de las personas mencionadas arriba vendió, acondicionó o cuidó el perro en su casa en los seis meses antes de la exposición.**
- **A un juez le está prohibido viajar a una exposición en la que juzga con expositores cuyos perros tendrán que ser juzgados por él.**
- **Bajo ningún concepto, un juez debería sociabilizar o permanecer con expositores que le presentarán perros. Sólo puede hacerlo DESPUÉS de haber completado su juzgamiento.**

## 12 QUEJAS

Cualquier decisión tomada por un juez en relación a las calificaciones, los premios y las clasificaciones es definitiva e inapelable.

Sin embargo, las quejas contra la organización de la exposición y las modalidades aplicadas para otorgar las calificaciones, los premios y las clasificaciones son aceptables y deben formularse inmediatamente por escrito **al organizador de la exposición, seguidas por un depósito de dinero (dos veces el importe de la inscripción) como garantía. La secretaría de la exposición debe tomar nota de las quejas.** Si se encontrara que la queja fuera injustificada, la garantía será entregada al organizador de la exposición. **Si se encontrara que la queja es justificada, el dinero debe ser rembolsado.**

## 13 SANCIONES

Las violaciones a estas regulaciones pueden ser castigadas con medidas disciplinarias. La FCI puede prohibir al organizador en cuestión el otorgamiento del CACIB en sus exposiciones internacionales durante uno o varios años. Tal decisión **es tomada por** el Comité General de la FCI, después de haberse realizado el descargo oral o escrito del organizador en cuestión. Cualquier apelación contra la penalización impuesta por el Comité General de la FCI será decidida en última instancia por la Asamblea General de la FCI.

## **14 PROHIBICIÓN DE EXPONER**

Todos los miembros y socios contratantes de la FCI están obligados, de acuerdo con su legislación nacional, a publicar una lista de todos los perros, expositores y/o guías con prohibición para ser expuestos/exponer. Todos los organizadores deben respetar esta prohibición.

## **15 APLICACIÓN**

Cada organizador de una exposición con CACIB tiene que observar las reglas y leyes del país en el que se desarrolla el evento. Ante quejas específicas, el Comité General de la FCI puede intervenir y tomar una decisión final (que puede llegar hasta la anulación de un CACIB concedido) en caso de incumplimiento de este reglamento por parte de los expositores, de los jueces de la FCI y/o de los organizadores de exposiciones internacionales de la FCI. Estas decisiones deberían servir a mantener la credibilidad de las exposiciones internacionales de la FCI y garantizar que se observen este reglamento.

# Reglamento Complementario para las Exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección de la Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI)

## PREÁMBULO

Una vez por año, en una exposición **internacional con CACIB** determinada por la Asamblea General de la FCI, se permite otorgar el título de **“Vencedor Mundial”**. Una vez por año, en una exposición **internacional con CACIB** determinada por cada sección de la FCI, se puede otorgar el título de **“Vencedor de Sección”**. **Los títulos de Vencedor Mundial y de Sección pueden ser otorgados a todas las razas, reconocidas por la FCI ya sea en forma definitiva o provisoria. Las razas que aún no están reconocidas, ni provisoria ni definitivamente, no pueden ingresarse en las exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección.** No hay “Reserva” del Vencedor Mundial o **Vencedor de Sección**. Estas exposiciones deben **organizarse con estricta observancia** de las regulaciones de la FCI.

Los miembros **de pleno derecho** de la FCI son los únicos que pueden organizar Exposiciones Mundiales o de Sección. El día en que se lleva a cabo la Exposición Mundial o de Sección en un continente, **está prohibido realizar otra exposición con CACIB en el mismo continente, el mismo día**. Independientemente de la sección donde tienen lugar estas exposiciones, debe haber un período mínimo de seis semanas entre la Exposición Mundial y la Exposición de Sección. Entre una Exposición Mundial y una Exposición de Sección (cuando son llevadas a cabo en el mismo continente), **debe haber** un intervalo de tres meses. La fecha de la Exposición Mundial es la que prevalece.

El importe de la inscripción en una Exposición Mundial o de Sección debe ser igual para todos los expositores. Sin embargo, se permite un descuento eventual al ser los expositores miembros de la asociación canina nacional que lleva a cabo la exposición.

## 1 REGULACIONES

El título de **“Vencedor Mundial”** y de **“Vencedor de Sección”** será otorgado a los perros macho y hembra propuestos para el CACIB (ver sección 7 “Títulos, premios y concursos en el ring de honor” del presente reglamento de exposiciones de la FCI). El otorgamiento de este título es independiente del número de inscritos para cada raza en particular. **En el caso de razas reconocidas provisoriamente por la FCI, los títulos de “Vencedor Mundial” y “Vencedor de Sección” serán otorgados al mejor macho y la mejor hembra entre las clases intermedia, abierta, trabajo y campeón.** Estas razas no pueden optar al CACIB.

El título de **“Vencedor Mundial – Joven”** o **“Vencedor de Sección - Joven”** será otorgado a los mejores jóvenes, macho y hembra, siempre y cuando hayan recibido la calificación «1ro Excelente».

El título de “**Vencedor Mundial – Veterano**” o “**Vencedor de Sección –Veterano**” será atribuido a los mejores veteranos, macho y hembra, siempre y cuando hayan conseguido la calificación “1ro Excelente”.

**Los títulos “Vencedor - Joven” y “Vencedor - Veterano” son otorgados según la lista de distribución de los CACIB de la FCI.**

El macho y la hembra propuestos para el CACIB, los mejores jóvenes, macho y hembra, que recibieron la calificación “1ro Excelente” y los mejores veteranos, macho y hembra, que consiguieron la calificación “1ro Excelente” compiten por el **Mejor de Raza y Mejor Sexo Opuesto (BOS)**.

Los títulos arriba mencionados así como el **Mejor de Raza y Mejor Sexo Opuesto** son otorgados por un solo juez, que debe ser nombrado de antemano.

Todos los perros deben ser juzgados de acuerdo con el **Reglamento de Exposiciones de la FCI**. Es facultativo el informe del juez. Los informes tienen que ser redactados en el idioma del país organizador o en uno de los cuatro idiomas de trabajo de la FCI **elegido por el juez**. Los organizadores deciden sobre el tipo de informe y son responsables de su traducción. Los organizadores tienen que anunciar en el cronograma de la exposición si está previsto o no **que los expositores reciban un informe escrito**.

Para las Exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección, es absolutamente **obligatoria** la división en grupos según la nomenclatura de las razas de la FCI. Cada grupo debe ser juzgado íntegro en un día.

No puede llevarse a cabo una competencia de « Vencedor del Día ». **Es obligación para** todos los « Mejores de Grupo » competir el último día de la exposición por el « Mejor de la Exposición ».

Durante cada Exposición Canina Mundial **y de Sección**, el organizador debería también llevar a cabo un Concurso Mundial **y de Sección** de Obediencia y una **competencia Mundial y de Sección de Junior Handling**.

## **2 PREDIO DE EXPOSICIÓN Y RINGS**

Las Exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección deberán llevarse a cabo en predios apropiados para tal propósito.

Cada ring debe ser lo suficientemente amplio como para que los perros puedan ser juzgados en posición de parados y como para **darles un espacio suficiente para poder desplazarse sin problema** en el ring, de acuerdo con el tamaño **y la cantidad** de perros.

Los organizadores de las Exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección deberán proporcionar un **ring de honor** lo **suficientemente** amplio, como para albergar a todos los perros a ser juzgados de acuerdo con los grupos de la FCI. **Los ejemplares compitiendo en todos los grupos y otras competencias en el ring de honor deberían ser pre-juzgados en pistas separadas con suficiente tiempo antes de ir al ring de honor según el horario. Un examen más detenido por parte del juez en el ring de honor debería limitarse a semi-finalistas o finalistas preseleccionados.**

**Los organizadores deben asegurarse que los vencedores de BOB tengan fácil acceso al ring de honor desde la pista de pre-juzgamiento.**

Si otras actividades se llevan a cabo durante la exposición, no pueden interferir en el buen desarrollo de la exposición.

El comité organizador debe asegurar protección suficiente en caso de que la exposición sea al aire libre.

### **3 JUECES**

Todos los jueces que ofician en Exposiciones Mundiales o de Sección deberán ser especialmente experimentados en la/s raza/s que van a juzgar y deben tener gran experiencia en importantes y grandes exposiciones de la FCI. Debe suministrarse prueba de esta experiencia.

Las competencias de « Mejor de Grupo » y « Mejor de Exposición » deben ser juzgadas por un solo juez, autorizado para hacerlo.

En las exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección, sólo un juez internacional para todas las razas de la FCI, de un país miembro **de pleno derecho** de la FCI, puede juzgar el “Mejor de Exposición” (BIS).

Solamente un juez de grupo de la FCI de un miembro **de pleno derecho** de la FCI aprobado para este grupo, o un juez para todas las razas internacional de la FCI de un miembro **de pleno derecho** de la FCI, puede juzgar las competencias de Mejor de Grupo (BIG).

Debe designarse un panel de jueces internacional y equilibrado para las Exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección. Las disposiciones del Art 10 INVITACIONES A JUZGAR punto g. del reglamento de exposiciones caninas (2/3 como mínimo de los jueces invitados deben ser jueces de la FCI aprobados por una OCN miembro de la FCI) deben respetarse. Además jueces calificados de países que no sean miembros de la FCI, pueden ser invitados esencialmente para juzgar las razas de sus países. Para las Mundiales, debería ser invitado – como mínimo– un juez de cada sección de la FCI.

Los programas de las exposiciones Mundial y de Sección deben establecer claramente las razas asignadas a los respectivos jueces.

Para las exposiciones Mundial y de Sección, las organizaciones caninas nacionales de los países donde tienen lugar los eventos deben designar y contratar a los jueces.

**Los jueces que son también los delegados oficiales de su OCN en una Asamblea General celebrada en el marco de una exposición Mundial deben tener un mínimo del 50% de sus gastos de viaje reembolsado por el organizador del evento.**

#### **4 VEEDOR DE LA FCI**

A Para cada exposición Mundial, un **veedor oficial** de la FCI será designado por el Comité General de la FCI. El Director Ejecutivo de la FCI ayudará al **veedor oficial** de la FCI.

Para las exposiciones de Sección, la sección correspondiente recomienda a **un veedor oficial de la FCI**, sujeto a la aprobación del Comité General de la FCI.

B El **veedor** de la FCI tiene las siguientes atribuciones:

a. asistir y **aconsejar** a los clubes organizadores durante los preparativos de la exposición.

b. asegurar que la organización canina nacional del país anfitrión ha seguido todas las reglas y regulaciones especiales de la FCI y que las mismas se aplican correctamente durante la exposición.

c. tomar nota de todas las quejas que se hagan durante la exposición y se refieran a violaciones a las reglas y regulaciones especiales de la FCI.

d. informar al Comité General de la FCI, a través de un amplio reporte escrito sobre las actividades, comunicar las quejas pertinentes a este Comité y asistir al Comité General de la FCI en la resolución de estos asuntos, si es necesario. **Una copia del informe debería ser enviada al presidente de la Comisión de Exposiciones de la FCI.**

C Si el **veedor** oficial de la FCI fuera también miembro del Comité General de la FCI, representará a la FCI en la exposición en el caso de que ningún miembro del Comité General de la FCI esté presente.

D **Todos los gastos de viaje, hospedaje y comidas del veedor de la FCI (exposiciones Mundiales y de Sección), deberán ser pagados por la organización canina nacional del país organizador así como también la misma dieta que los jueces.**



**El texto original es la versión inglesa.**

**Estas regulaciones fueron aprobadas por el Comité General de la FCI en Berlín, el 31 de octubre 2007 y estarán vigentes a partir del 1° de enero de 2008.**

**Las partes en negrita fueron aprobadas por el Comité General en Viena, abril de 2012. Se aplican a partir del 1° de enero de 2013.**

**Se ha establecido un período de transición de dos años (hasta el 31 de diciembre de 2014) para permitirles a las organizaciones miembros o contratantes de la FCI ajustar sus propios reglamentos nacionales.**

**Anexo al REGLAMENTO DE EXPOSICIONES CANINAS y de JUECES de la  
Fédération Cynologique Internationale**

**REGLAMENTO COMPLEMENTARIO PARA LOS GASTOS DE VIAJE Y DIETA  
DIARIA PARA LOS JUECES**

1.

Todos los gastos habituales de viaje, **incluyendo** el kilometraje real en coche (le corresponde al Comité General de la FCI fijar la tasa de reembolso con un mínimo de 0.35 €/km), aparcamiento, tren, autobús, taxi, vuelo aéreo (precio razonable en clase económica con un seguro de cancelación del vuelo – de ser posible – y una opción para poder cambiar su vuelo), así como la comida durante el viaje, que tenga que pagar el juez, tienen que ser reembolsados inmediatamente cuando llega o conforme a un eventual convenio entre él y los organizadores.

2.

**Cuando juzga en exposiciones internacionales, de Sección o Mundiales, un juez debe recibir de los organizadores, además de los gastos mencionados arriba, una “dieta diaria” de por lo menos 35 € por cada día de juzgamiento y por cada día de viaje. El organizador está autorizado a tener una dieta diaria para sus jueces domésticos según sus leyes nacionales.**

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# The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals and tail docking in dogs

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## Summary

The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals was opened for signature in Strasbourg on 13 November 1987 and entered into force on 1 May 1992. This Convention states that: 'Surgical operations for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a pet animal or for other non-curative purposes shall be prohibited and, in particular: the docking of tails'. At present, 15 of the 27 States in the European Union have ratified this Convention (with or without reserving their position on tail docking) and have prohibited cosmetic surgical operations. In addition, four European States have prohibited these operations, even though they did not ratify the Convention. These policy positions agree with both the current knowledge on tail amputations in dogs and the opinions of official veterinary associations in Europe and North America.

## Keywords

Amputation – Animal welfare – Canine – Companion animal – Cosmetic surgery – Docking – Dog – European Union – Legislation – Suffering – Surgical intervention – Tail docking – Welfare.

## Introduction

The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (12) was opened for signature in Strasbourg on 13 November 1987. The Convention entered into force on 1 May 1992, after ratification by four countries (Belgium, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg).

The Convention states (Article 10 – Surgical operations) that: 'Surgical operations for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a pet animal or for other non-curative purposes shall be prohibited and, in particular: the docking of tails [...]. Exceptions to these prohibitions shall be permitted only: if a veterinarian considers non-curative procedures necessary either for veterinary medical reasons

or for the benefit of any particular animal; [...] Operations in which the animal will or is likely to experience severe pain shall be carried out under anaesthesia only by a veterinarian or under his supervision. Operations for which no anaesthesia is required may be carried out by a person competent under national legislation.'

The question of amputations on companion animals, chiefly tail docking in dogs, illustrates the delicate balance between arguments about animal welfare and some 'traditional' procedures. Such conflict is partly why legislation is necessary in these types of issues. This paper summarises the legal position of European Member States towards tail docking, as of 2006, and briefly surveys the relevant issues (reviewed in 5, 6, 34, 52).

## Reasons for tail docking in dogs

Arguments for docking canine tails may be roughly classified into four categories:

a) prophylactic docking:

- in gundogs, to prevent tail damage caused by ground hedges (e.g. brambles), etc.;
- in long-haired breeds, to improve hygiene;

b) economic/cosmetic docking to avoid economic loss: some dog breeders, for instance, fear they will not be able to sell pups with intact tails from breeds whose standard requires tail docking;

c) cosmetic docking: these arguments depend on tradition or aesthetic criteria. In some cases, docking is performed to standardise puppies from a litter in which the pups are born with tails of varying length;

d) docking for convenience: this is performed mainly to prevent large dogs, in particular, from hitting or breaking objects in the home when wagging their tails (5, 13, 34).

The authors could also quote some outdated arguments, such as rabies prevention (rabies germs were supposedly attracted to dog tails) and historical tax avoidance, especially in the United Kingdom and United States of America. These taxes originated in hunting, a sport for the wealthy, in which the tail of a dog was essential. Dogs reserved for such expensive sports were thus taxed (and kept their tails), whereas working dogs were docked, to avoid the tax. It should be noted that this tax could vary according to tail length. In many cases, when the tax was abolished, docking survived (5, 34, 52).

## Problems caused by tail docking

### Tail docking and pain

Docking the tails of dogs generally occurs before the pups are five days old and can be carried out surgically or by banding (using a rubber ring). The tail is a complex anatomical structure comprising 6 to 23 vertebrae, ligaments, muscles and tendons, the whole tail being innervated and vascularised. It should be stressed that, anatomically, a puppy perceives as much pain in its tail as an adult dog. Indeed, its incomplete myelination does not prevent the conduction of painful impulses, but rather modifies the speed of conduction (27, 34). It is also now established that pain impulses in adults normally pass along unmyelinated nerves. Moreover, recent studies have shown that the nervous system of puppies is indeed immature, but that this immaturity contributes to neonatal animals feeling more pain than when they are adult (20).

There is only one study on the pain felt by puppies at the time of surgical docking, i.e. amputation (36). The study concludes that not only is docking a painful operation, but that the procedure in itself is stressful to the pups. However, there is no study that focuses on the pain experienced when tails are docked by banding. Pain inflicted by this method (and the prolonged ischaemia associated with it) can be compared with the pain caused by 'compartment syndrome' in humans, which can also be experimentally replicated in dogs (42). In the acute form, muscle ischaemia causes so much pain for the human patient that an emergency admission to hospital is necessary. In its chronic form it usually affects sportspeople and leads to the immediate stopping of any effort for 10 to 20 minutes (22). It remains to be determined whether adult pain is similar to the pain experienced by a young member of the same species, placed in the same conditions. This subject is currently being investigated, for example, in humans (2).

In short, all the available evidence supports the claim that docking causes acute pain to dogs. In contrast, no evidence could be found to support the counter-claim that newborn pups do not experience any pain at the time of docking (5).

### Complications and other problems which potentially stem from docking

Like most operations, docking operations are associated with complications, such as neuromas – for instance in dogs (24), lambs (21) and piglets (47) – which may, in themselves, be painful (8). Docking operations are also associated with the risk of chronic health problems, such as atrophy and degeneration of the tail and pelvic muscles, in turn leading to an increased risk of faecal incontinence or increased sensitivity to pain in adulthood (5).

It should be noted that tail docking is not generally performed by veterinarians. In Australia, for example, 51% of breeders surveyed docked their own dogs (37). Thus, this operation is likely to be carried out under unsatisfactory hygiene conditions and with no medical control, further increasing the risk of complications (34).

The absence of a tail can also cause balance and communication problems in canines (in particular, aggressive interactions with other dogs) (5, 34, 53), since the tail is very important in both these areas. All these subjects require further study.

### Pain management

Tail docking also raises the question of pain management, a fundamental concern in veterinary medicine. Successful pain management relies mainly on the ability of the

veterinarian to perceive animal pain, and on their knowledge (and the quality) of anaesthetics (associated risks). Other factors may intervene, such as:

- the cost of drugs
- the graduation year of the veterinarian (more recent graduates are more likely to prescribe analgesics)
- whether the veterinarian attends continuing education courses
- the experience of the veterinarian in treating cats and dogs (10, 17, 18, 29, 40).

In addition to pain sustained during the operation, post-operative pain following tail docking is likely and should also be taken into account (5, 36). This has been demonstrated in pigs (28) and lambs (41). There is, however, no research yet on pups. At present, 83% of surveyed Canadian veterinarians use no peri-operative analgesia when docking pups (29).

## Prophylactic aspects of tail docking

One major argument for retaining tail docking in puppies is that it may have a preventive role against hunting wounds in adulthood. However, this argument should be placed in context, since hunting induces a whole variety of health problems, trauma being just one of them (7, 11, 30, 33). Dogs should be sufficiently prepared for hunting, otherwise the physical strain can cause muscle injuries. Indeed, as in human athletes, physical performances generate specific physiological responses in dogs (50). As a consequence, insufficient preparation of a dog and/or adverse working conditions are likely to induce muscle disorders in the legs as well as the tail (for example, 'limber tail syndrome', also called 'cold' or 'dead tail') (48, 51). Appropriate training, warming up (e.g. walking for a few minutes) and cooling down (a 10-to-20-minute walk) may prevent most muscular disorders. This is particularly important for dogs that may be left in a cage for several hours (as a temporary kennel or for transportation) (49). Other problems may stem from inadequate dog management during hunting, for instance, 'exhaustion syndrome' from strenuous activity (7).

Moreover, hunting may cause a great variety of other injuries to the dog (haematomas, scratches, wounds of varying depth, fractures) on all parts of the body (7, 30, 33). These injuries are mainly due to interactions with other animals (wild boar, badgers, dogs, snakes) and are seldom caused by the terrain. When terrain does cause wounds, they are primarily located on the cushiony pads of their paws or on the body as scratches. Ear injuries

seldom occur (that is, injuries only to the ear – rather, the injuries occur to the whole face) and tail damage happens even less often (O. Bertrand, personal communication). It would be useful to conduct an epidemiological study to quantify this empirical information.

Tail docking is supposed to prevent wounds caused during hunting. It could be argued that this explains why tail damage is rare. However, docked dogs are not the only ones to hunt in terrain with undergrowth that could damage them. Undocked dogs of the same and other breeds also go hunting. In other words, not all dogs destined to hunt in damaging terrain are systematically docked (34, 52).

Finally, to the knowledge of the authors, and in accordance with previous articles (5, 34), there are no figures on the number of dogs that are currently used in high-risk situations (supposing that such situations are more likely to induce tail damage), or on the amount of tail damage sustained by these dogs (owing to the length of their tail) in comparison with dogs sold as companion animals. The only study which focuses on this question (13, see also 31) demonstrates that, in 12,129 veterinary cases, there was no statistically significant correlation between tail damage and undocked tails. (These figures come from a database started in 1965.) In other words, tail docking cannot be recommended as a prophylactic procedure against tail injuries. Nevertheless, more precise epidemiological studies (of individuals rather than breeds) are needed.

It should be noted that the authors, like other researchers, have found no epidemiological studies that focus on the other objectives of tail docking (hygiene, in particular) (5, 34).

## Alternatives and associated risks

A possible alternative to tail docking is breeding for congenital taillessness (anury) or short-tailed individuals (brachyury). Such phenotypes have been detected in one breed of cat (Manx cats) and several dog breeds (27). Several genes lead to the loss of caudal vertebrae and then to shortening of the tail, as shown, for example, in mice (23). The T-gene, responsible for normal posterior mesoderm development, has been located in dogs and sequenced (27). In cats, a single gene with dominant inheritance is strongly suspected (16, 43), but genetic analyses are necessary. Owing to embryonic lethality of the homozygous genotype, the expression of the short-tailed or tailless phenotype must occur through heterozygotes (16, 23, 27). In viable, heterozygous genotypes, incomplete tail development may be associated with often

serious anatomical anomalies, such as idiopathic megacolon and spina bifida. These anomalies are usually concentrated in the rear part of the animal, as, for instance, in cats (14, 16, 32, 39, 54), and primarily observed in tailless individuals, again as in cats (16, 43). The short tails of those animals which are not completely tailless have been attributed to a lower expression of the 'Manx gene', leading to a weaker disturbance of early embryonic growth, in comparison with the disturbance in homozygous individuals (16, 43). Such an association has not been detected in dogs. However, anecdotal observations of tailless dogs (two tailless Cairn terriers) (26) and calves (two Holstein, one Limosin) (15) reported signs similar to those observed in tailless cats. These suggest that anury is likely to be associated with major anatomical malformations in mammals.

We should, therefore, be very cautious before selecting short-tailed animals as a breeding objective. Nonetheless, this has been suggested for sheep, to improve their well-being (the underlying hypothesis being that tailless sheep are less prone to fly strike) (46). In relation to gundogs, an alternative would be to focus on the quality of the fur, possibly at tail level (if, that is, it can be proved that the tail is particularly likely to get damaged). The presence of a 'brush' (a tuft of denser and thicker hairs at the end of the tail, as observed in some dog breeds) could become a breeding objective.

## Positions taken by official veterinary associations

In various countries, official veterinary associations are opposed to routine and/or cosmetic tail docking. They do not systematically rule on prophylactic docking. When associations do address prophylactic docking, they are opposed to it, at least for ethical reasons if not for scientific ones (given the lack of data). They all accept therapeutic docking for diagnosed medical problems. Listed below are some examples of these positions.

*a)* In Australia, the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) states: 'Cosmetic tail docking of dogs is an unnecessary, unjustifiable surgical alteration and is detrimental to the animal's welfare [...]. Official policy of the AVA, which represents the veterinary profession, is that tail docking should be declared illegal in all States and Territories, except for professionally diagnosed therapeutic reasons, and only then by registered veterinarians under conditions of anaesthesia that minimise pain and stress [...]. The fashion-driven procedure is generally performed on young puppies and usually without any anaesthetic, using scissors or a very tight rubber band. The cut goes through many highly sensitive nerves. Put simply, tail docking is

the needless mutilation of a dog, usually a puppy, and is passionately opposed by most veterinarians in Australia. There is absolutely no scientific basis for continuing with amputation of dogs' tails [...]; indeed there are definite signs that it is cruel and the animals suffer. The AVA encourages Kennel Control Councils throughout Australia to phase tail-docking requirements out of the relevant breed standards. The AVA also considers breeding standards should favour natural tails over docked tails and discourages the showing of dogs with docked tails' (4).

*b)* In Canada, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association does not mention tail docking in dogs as a prophylactic method. It is only mentioned in the 'cosmetic surgery' category: 'The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) opposes surgical alteration of any animal, for purely cosmetic purposes. The CVMA believes that cosmetic surgery is unnecessary. Surgical alterations in cases of injury or for reasons of health are not considered cosmetic. Examples of cosmetic procedures include: tail docking in the [...] canine species' (9).

*c)* In Europe, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) confirms that: 'FVE considers that surgery for cosmetic reasons should be prohibited. FVE urges Member States of the Council of Europe to sign, ratify and ensure proper implementation of the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals and in particular of its Article 10, if they have not done so already. [...] FVE also encourages breed associations and authorities to modify their breed standards so that surgery for cosmetic reasons is no longer required and to promote this change to all show judges, breeders and the pet-owning public. FVE also calls on the authorities to introduce rules to ban the exhibition of animals that have been subject to these operations' (19).

*d)* In the United Kingdom, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) states: 'Currently, the RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct for veterinary surgeons accepts that docking may be permissible if it is for therapeutic or truly prophylactic reasons [...] yet evidence suggests a lot of non-therapeutic docking is still carried out, whether by veterinary surgeons or others' (35). As a consequence, 'the RCVS welcomes the new clause and amendments to the Animal Welfare Bill, [...] which tend to make it unlawful to dock a dog's tail except for the purpose of medical treatment [...]. In the view of RCVS, [...] there is insufficient evidence to support [tail docking as a preventive measure against later injuries in working dogs]. It would be better to ban docking altogether, and then look to see whether a problem in fact emerges' (45).

*e)* In the United States of America, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) reports that: 'ear cropping and tail docking in dogs for cosmetic reasons are



not medically indicated nor of benefit to the patient. These procedures cause pain and distress, and, as with all surgical procedures, are accompanied by inherent risks of anaesthesia, blood loss, and infection. Therefore, veterinarians should counsel dog owners about these matters before agreeing to perform these surgeries.' AVMA does not mention tail docking in dogs as a prophylactic measure (1).

## Additional opinions

Several studies, conducted among breeders and veterinarians (29, 34, 37) in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, respectively, show that opinions are divided between these two professions. Indeed, whereas most veterinarians state that tail docking causes significant or severe pain and should not be continued (despite its potential as a source of income), most breeders believe that docking is not painful or causes little pain, and want it to continue. It is reasonable to assume that veterinarians, being in closer contact with animals that are suffering through being ill or wounded, are better informed on tail damage than breeders. Moreover, veterinarians are trained to recognise typical pain behaviour, and this recognition significantly increases the ability to distinguish between painful and less painful treatments, for instance in rats (44). Such divided opinions raise questions about the vested interests of the breeders, the breed societies which set the breed standards and the information which they distribute to their members and elsewhere. It is noteworthy that most veterinarians and breeders seem to agree that breed standards are the main reason for tail docking, but some breeders also state that this is a precautionary measure against diseases and injury, or damage to objects in the house.

## Legal positions in European Member States

### States that have signed the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals

At present, two countries have signed the Convention without ratifying it: Italy (1987) and the Netherlands (1987). In the Netherlands, tail docking is prohibited (Gezondheid in Welzijnswet voor Dieren [Animal Health and Welfare Act], 1996), whereas it is still permitted in Italy. Seven countries have signed and ratified the Convention without reservation:

- Austria
- Cyprus
- Greece

- Lithuania
- Sweden
- Bulgaria
- Romania.

It should be noted that Switzerland has also ratified the Convention without reservations: tail (and ear) docking is prohibited, docked dogs cannot be shown, and it is forbidden to export dogs temporarily with the aim of docking their tails (Ordinance on Animal Protection, 27 May 1981; Ordinance on the Importation, Transit and Export of Animals and Livestock Products, 20 April 1988).

### States that have signed the Convention with reservations

Eight European Union Member States (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal) signed and ratified the Convention with reservations on tail docking. However, in most of these countries, tail docking is no longer allowed. In Belgium, tail docking in dogs was prohibited on 1 January 2006 (Arrêté Royal [Royal Decree] of the 17 May 2001; Law of the 18 October 1991). In the Czech Republic, surgical changes to the appearance of an animal are forbidden. Nevertheless, the law (no. 246/1992) only mentions ear cropping, so tail docking is still practised, according to the Czech Canine Union (CMKU), which is affiliated to the World Canine Organisation (FCI) (A. Kostalova, Head of the CMKU, personal communication). In Denmark, tail docking to change the appearance of a dog is forbidden and docked dogs born after 1 June 1996 cannot be shown, no matter in which country the dog was born (Danish Animal Welfare Act, 1991). Tail docking is, however, still authorised for five gundog breeds:

- the Weimaraner
- the Brittany spaniel
- the German shorthaired pointer
- the wirehaired pointer
- the Vizsla.

An amendment, still in discussion, was submitted to the Danish Parliament in 2003 to abolish these exceptions.

In Finland, tail docking was prohibited on 1 July 1996 (the Animal Welfare Act). Since that date, docked dogs born in Finland cannot be shown. In France, tail docking is still allowed (Law no. 2003 628, 2003). In Germany, tail docking was prohibited in 2006 (Neufassung des Tierschutzgesetzes [Revised version of the Animal Protection Law]), but is still permitted for medical reasons (with veterinary justification) and for some gundog breeds (which must pass a test). Since 2001, docked dogs can no

longer be shown (Tierschutz-Hundeverordnung [Animal Protection – Dog Regulation]). In Luxembourg, tail docking in dogs was prohibited in 1992 (Règlement Grand-ducal du 31 juillet 1992 [Luxembourg's Law of the 30th July 1992]). In Portugal, amputations modifying the appearance of animals are only allowed when performed by a veterinarian for medical purposes or in the best interests of the animal. A veterinary certificate is required, whether the animal is domestic or imported (Decreto-Lei [Decree-Law] no. 276/2001).

### States that have not signed the Convention

Situations in these countries vary. Neither Ireland (the Protection of Animals Act, 1965) nor Slovenia (P. Košir, Chief Veterinary Officer, personal communication) have prohibited tail docking. In Spain, docking is still performed because the national law permits mutilations for breed standard requirements. Only Catalonia (DOGC no. 3926, 16/07/2003) and Andalusia (BOJA no. 237, 10/12/2003) have specific laws forbidding mutilation for cosmetic purposes. Docked dogs are allowed to be exhibited at shows, according to the Royal Spanish Canine Society, which is also affiliated to the FCI. In Estonia, tail docking is prohibited (Animal Protection Act, 2000). In the United Kingdom, tail docking is forbidden, except for medical reasons or for working dogs (including gundogs) of less than five days old, for prophylactic reasons. This operation must be performed by a veterinary surgeon (Animal Welfare Act, January 2006). The Bill submitted to Parliament on 26 January 2006 to abolish the clause on working dogs was rejected, but the veterinarian must certify that he or she docked the tail of a dog that was likely to be a working dog. In Hungary, interventions to change the appearance of animals and other surgical interventions are forbidden unless conducted therapeutically or for a prophylactic purpose, in the interests of the health of the animal. Castration and maintenance of breed characteristics are, however, permitted. In Malta, surgical operations to modify the appearance of an animal, in which any part of the body is removed or damaged, other than for a curative purpose, are illegal. Docked dogs cannot be entered for or admitted to shows or inspections or competitions (Animal Welfare Act, 2002). In Poland, deliberate mutilations of animals are forbidden, except for medical purposes (Animal Protection Act, 2003). The authors are unaware of the legal positions of Latvia and Slovakia.

## Discussion and conclusions

This paper underlines the need for further precise studies on tail docking in dogs and its medical consequences, to add to the existing body of literature (5, 34, 52).

Nevertheless, by examining studies on the newborn of other species, such as calves (3), humans (25), lambs (41) and piglets (38), it is reasonable to assume that docking the tails of puppies is painful. In addition, this pain may continue for a few days or up to several years, as there can be long-term side effects from the operation (neuroma, incontinence). Therefore, when docking is conducted, pain must be managed both at the time of the operation and post-operatively. At present, neither of these issues is being adequately addressed.

Like previous studies, this review demonstrates that, to date, there has been no scientific study, comparing docked and undocked dogs of the same breed before and after a docking ban, to illustrate or support the supposed animal health objectives of tail docking. Can it then be assumed that the evidence is not there? It would certainly have been in the interests of proponents of docking to come forward with such data. Moreover, the particular problem of preventing tail damage in gundogs should be evaluated in the overall context of preventing all hunting wounds. Indeed, hunting generates a large variety of health problems, including superficial lesions to the tail. It would be more useful to consider additional prevention methods, such as binding the tail or providing education programmes for hunters that include safety and first aid for wounded dogs (33). Where docking is permitted for working dogs, there is a practical difficulty in knowing which puppy from a litter will actually hunt, as most will become companion animals. More generally, the number of animals within a hunting breed that will indeed be involved in hunting is not known (31, 34). Considering the global population of identified dogs in Belgium, an estimation shows that about 5% of these dogs may hunt, whereas about one third of them were traditionally docked before the tail-docking prohibition (Lefebvre, 2006).

Based on current knowledge and ethical considerations, authors of many previous articles, as well as official veterinary associations, have concluded that tail docking cannot be considered as a prophylactic measure to prevent damage caused by practices such as hunting. From an ethical point of view, these articles and opinions examine which item carries most weight: the suffering of the whole newborn population of traditionally docked breeds or the pain felt by the few individuals possibly requiring an amputation in adulthood. Some of these papers suggest a global ban on tail docking with individual authorisations for medical purposes or pups that will actually be exposed to risky activities in adulthood.

Most European countries have integrated these conclusions into their legislation: 15 of the 27 European Union countries have ratified this Convention, with or without reserving their position on tail docking, and have also prohibited this operation. In addition, four European States have prohibited the operation (except for medical



reasons) even though they did not ratify the Convention. As a result of the lack of scientific data, the countries that have introduced legislation have adopted one of two legal positions: either a total prohibition (e.g. Switzerland) or a prohibition with exceptions for several gundog breeds (e.g. Belgium).

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## La Convention européenne pour la protection des animaux de compagnie et l'écourtage de la queue des chiens

D. Lefebvre, D. Lips & J.M. Giffroy

### Résumé

La Convention européenne pour la protection des animaux de compagnie, ouverte à la signature des États membres du Conseil de l'Europe le 13 novembre 1987 à Strasbourg, est entrée en vigueur le 1<sup>er</sup> mai 1992. Cette Convention stipule que : « les interventions chirurgicales destinées à modifier l'apparence d'un animal de compagnie ou à d'autres fins non curatives doivent être interdites et en particulier : la coupe de la queue ». À l'heure actuelle, 15 des 27 États membres de l'Union européenne ont ratifié cette convention, avec ou sans réserves quant à l'interdiction de l'écourtage de la queue, et ont proscrit les interventions chirurgicales à des fins esthétiques. En outre, quatre États européens parmi ceux qui n'ont pas ratifié la Convention ont néanmoins interdit ces interventions. Ces dispositions législatives concordent avec les connaissances actuelles sur l'écourtage de la queue chez les chiens ainsi qu'avec la position des associations vétérinaires officielles en Europe et en Amérique du Nord sur le sujet.

### Mots-clés

Amputation – Animal de compagnie – Bien-être animal – Bien-être animal – Bien-être animal – Canin – Caudectomie – Chien – Chirurgie à des fins esthétiques – Coupe de la queue – Intervention chirurgicale – Législation – Souffrance – Union européenne.



## El "Convenio europeo para la protección de los animales domésticos" y la amputación de la cola en perros

D. Lefebvre, D. Lips & J.M. Giffroy

### Resumen

El Convenio europeo para la protección de los animales domésticos quedó abierto a firmas el 13 de noviembre de 1987 en Estrasburgo, y entró en vigor el 1 de mayo de 1992. En él se afirma que "deberán prohibirse las operaciones quirúrgicas practicadas con el fin de modificar la apariencia de un animal de compañía o con otros fines no terapéuticos y, en particular, la amputación de la cola". Por ahora, 15 de los 27 Estados de la Unión Europea han ratificado el texto,

reservándose o no su postura sobre la amputación de la cola, y prohibido esas operaciones quirúrgicas de índole cosmética. Además, cuatro Estados europeos han proscrito este tipo de operaciones pese a no haber ratificado el Convenio. Este principio encaja con lo que actualmente se sabe acerca de la amputación de la cola en perros y coincide con la postura de asociaciones de veterinarios públicos de Europa y Norteamérica.

#### Palabras clave

Amputación – Amputación de la cola – Animal de compañía – Bienestar – Bienestar animal – Canino – Cirugía cosmética – Intervención quirúrgica – Legislación – Perro – Sufrimiento – Unión Europea.



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## NEUROLOGICAL, RESPIRATORY, BEHAVIOURAL AND ENDOCRINE EFFECTS OF TAIL DOCKING IN NEWBORN DOGS SUBMITTED TO EPIDURAL ANESTHESIA

EFEITOS NEUROLÓGICOS, RESPIRATÓRIOS, COMPORTAMENTAIS E ENDÓCRINOS  
DECORRENTES DA CAUDECTOMIA, EM CÃES RECÉM-NASCIDOS  
SUBMETIDOS À ANESTESIA EPIDURAL

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### SUMMARY

Tail docking is performed in some dog breeds to prevent injuries and to improve appearance. It has been forbidden in some countries for ethical reasons. The aim of this study was to investigate the behavioural, endocrine, neurological and respiratory effects produced by tail docking in newborn dogs. Fifty-two puppies ranging from 2 to 7 days of age were used. Sacrococcygeal epidural anaesthesia was performed using a 27 G x ½" needle and an insulin syringe filled with 0.2 mL of 0.5% lignocaine with adrenaline. Tail docking was performed in half of the puppies of each litter and the other half were used as controls. Plasma cortisol concentration, weight gain, respiratory rate, vocalization, defecation, urination, movement and suction, anogenital, magnum, flexor, vestibular and tactile reflexes were investigated both before and 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 24 hours after tail docking. Data were compared using ANOVA, followed by Student Newman Keuls, Friedman or Mann-Whitney tests where applicable. Tail docking after epidural anaesthesia did not modify respiratory rate, behaviour, neurological reflexes or plasma cortisol concentration up to 24 hours after surgery. It should be considered that epidural anaesthesia might have masked a possible harmful effect of tail docking on these variables.

**KEY-WORDS:** Cortisol. Epidural anaesthesia. Lidocaine. Puppies. Tail docking.

### RESUMO

A caudectomia é realizada em algumas raças de cães visando prevenir traumas, além de uma questão de estética. O objetivo deste estudo foi avaliar os efeitos comportamentais, endócrinos, neurológicos e respiratórios produzidos pela caudectomia em cães recém-nascidos. Foram utilizados cinquenta e dois filhotes de dois a sete dias de idade. A anestesia epidural sacrocóccigea foi realizada utilizando uma agulha 27 G x ½" e seringa de insulina com 0,2 mL de lidocaína 0,5% com adrenalina. A caudectomia foi realizada em metade dos filhotes de cada fêmea e a outra metade foi utilizada como controle. A concentração de cortisol plasmático, ganho de peso, frequência respiratória, vocalização, defecação, micção, movimentação, e reflexos anogenital, de sucção, magnum, flexor, vestibular e tátil foram avaliados antes e 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 e 24 horas após a caudectomia. Os resultados foram comparados utilizando ANOVA, seguidos de Student Newman Keuls, Friedman or Mann-Whitney tests. Não houve diferença em tempo ou entre os grupos em nenhuma variável. A caudectomia realizada após anestesia epidural não alterou frequência respiratória, comportamento, reflexos neurológicos e concentração de cortisol plasmático até 24 horas após a cirurgia. Deve ser considerado que a anestesia epidural pode ter mascarado um efeito prejudicial da caudectomia nestas variáveis.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Anestesia epidural. Cães. Caudectomia. Cortisol. Lidocaína.

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## INTRODUCTION

Tail docking is a practice performed for almost 2000 years in some breeds of dogs, as it was a general belief that this practice would prevent rabies (MORTON, 1992). Before the 19th century, it was alleged that amputation of the tail could be useful to increase speed, to strengthen the back and to prevent dogs from being bitten when ratting or fighting (MORTON, 1992).

Nowadays, tail docking is performed to prevent tail injuries when the dogs are used for hunting or guarding, to improve the appearance of a particular breed of dog, making the dog more attractive, and also to promote better hygiene (MORTON, 1992). Some studies opposed to this practice claim that it is unnecessary, painful and unjustified (FRENCH et al., 1994a). An epidemiological study involving more than 12,000 dogs showed that tail docking could not be seen as a prophylactic procedure to prevent tail injuries (DARKE et al., 1985).

The United Kingdom, Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and more recently Australia have banned all forms of cosmetic surgery in dogs for ethical reasons (ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS, 2000, SILLINCE, 2003). In Brazil, although not prohibited, tail docking is not recommended in veterinary practice, unless it has a clinical indication (BRASIL, 2008). The AVA (Australian Veterinary Association) position about surgical mutilation of animals suggests that it should be done only when there is a benefit to the animal, like in sheep, where tail docking has some advantages to the animal in the future (FRENCH et al., 1994b).

The position of the breeders is that it would be difficult to sell undocked puppies of breeds that are usually docked and some unsold puppies would have an uncertain destiny (MORTON, 1992). In two surveys performed in Australia, 84% of the breeders were in favour of docking, while 83%-86% of the veterinarians were against the practice (FRENCH et al., 1994a).

Cortisol, a well-accepted indicator of the stress response, increases in response to stimulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical system. A correlation between high plasma cortisol concentration and abnormal behaviour associated with pain after tail docking was observed in lambs (MELLOR & MURRAY, 1989).

The aim of this study was to investigate the behavioural, endocrine, neurological and respiratory effects produced by tail docking of newborn dogs.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study was approved by the Ethical Committee for Animal Experimentation, from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, University of São Paulo State (protocol number of 64/2003). Fifty-two clinically healthy client-owned puppies from eight litters of different breeds (Pinscher, Cocker Spaniel, Rottweiler, Brazilian Fox, Weimaraner, Boxer and Neapolitan Mastiff) were used after written owner

consent. Males and females, ranging from two to seven days of age were used according to Table 1.

As the puppies arrived in the experimental room, they were maintained with their mothers, labelled with numbered tags and left alone for at least an hour to settle down. Respiratory rate was measured by observation of chest movement. Neurological reflexes and physical condition were evaluated before the study and any showing clinical or neurological abnormality were removed from the study. The puppies were weighed and all of them were simultaneously removed from their mother. The area around the tail was clipped and prepared for surgery. Sacrococcygeal epidural anaesthesia was performed after palpation of the S5-C1 space, in all puppies, using a 13 x 4 (27 G x ½'') needle introduced from the dorsal to the ventral aspect of the tail with an insulin syringe filled with 0.2 mL of 0.5% lignocaine with adrenaline. Tail docking was performed according to Hedlund (2002) in half of the puppies from each litter<sup>17</sup>. The other puppies, used as controls, were manipulated and restrained in the same way for administration of epidural anaesthesia. Anaesthesia and surgery were performed by the same person in all cases.

The following behavioural measurements were performed and classified as absent (0), present (1), or as otherwise stated: posture (1= lying down, still; 2= standing position); movement (1= without movement; 2= lying down with smooth movements of the head; 3= lying down with movement of the head and all limbs); vestibular straightness willingness of the puppies to return to sternal recumbence when placed in lateral recumbence); tactile (the puppies' eyes were closed, the dorsal area of the forelegs touched in the inferior part of the table: the normal response was considered when the puppy lift their legs and supported on the table); suction reflex (by introducing the little finger into the mouth and observing suction); magnum reflex (maintaining the neonate in dorsal recumbence and rotating the head to one side: the normal response was extension of the contralateral forelimb and flexion of the limb at the same side the head was rotated); anogenital reflex (by stimulating the neonate genital organs with a blunt pen and observing urination); flexion reflex (the neonate was held by the neck in the air: the normal response was flexion of the spinal column).

Blood samples (0.5 mL) were collected from the jugular vein using vacutainer (Vacuum II®, Labnew-Indústria e Comércio I) tubes with EDTA. Plasma was obtained by centrifugation (Centrifuga Excelsa Baby MOD 206, FANEM) and maintained at -20°C (Freezer 260, Brastemp) for cortisol assay. Plasma cortisol concentrations were measured by solid phase radioimmunoassay using a commercial kit (Coat-A-Count Cortisol- DPC®, FANEM ). The sensitivity was 5.5 mmol/L and cross reactivity was 0.34% for corticosterone, 0.38% for cortisone and 11.4% for 11-deoxicortisol.

Except for cortisol and weight, which were measured before and 24 hours after tail docking, all other measurements were performed before and 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 24 hours after tail docking.

Statistical analysis was performed using Graphpad Instat software. Parametric data were compared using analysis of variance followed by the Student-Newman-Keuls Test. Non-parametric data were compared using analysis of variance followed by the Friedman test to

compare differences in time in each group and Mann-Whitney test to compare differences between groups at each time. A P value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

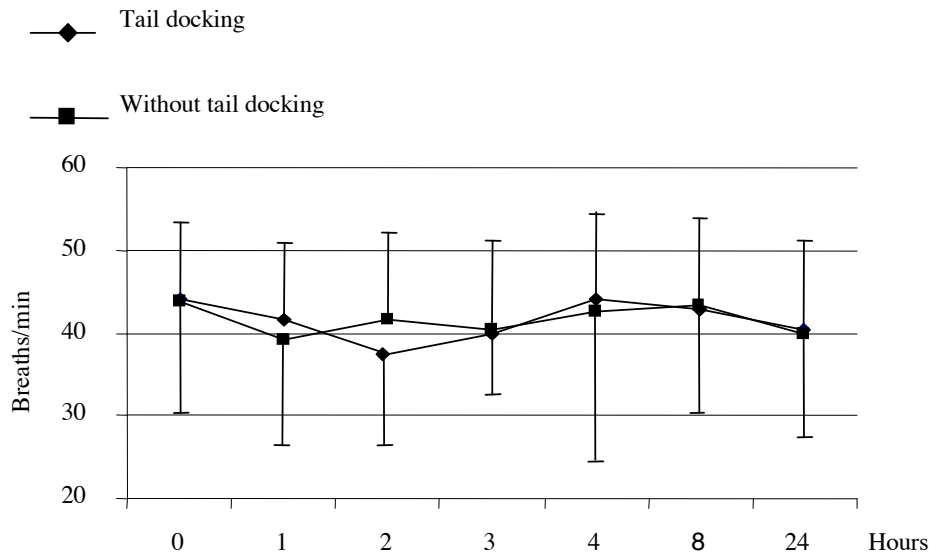
**Table 1** - Breeds, number and age of the neonates submitted to tail docking.

N° of litter	Breed	N° of animals	Age (days)
1	Pinscher	3	4
2	Cocker Spaniel	3	7
3	Cocker Spaniel	9	6
4	Rottweiler	11	2
5	Neapolitan Mastiff	6	4
6	Weimaraner	8	5
7	Boxer	7	3
8	Brazilian Fox	5	3
Total		52	

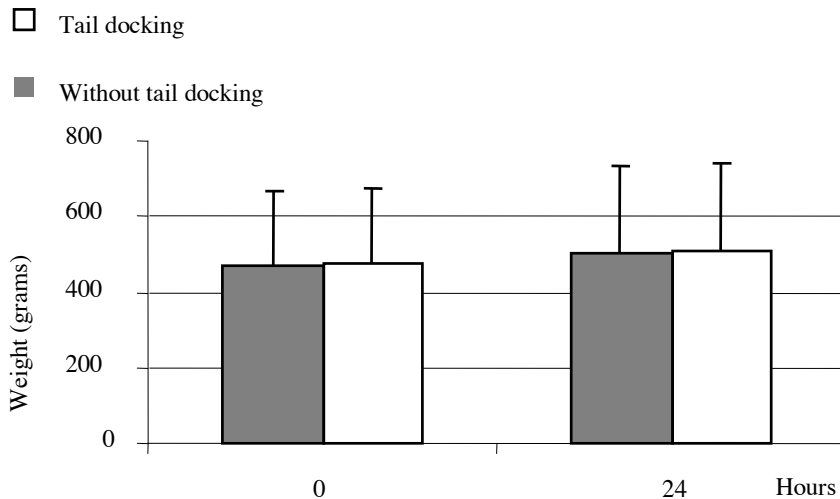
## RESULTS

Respiratory rate was not modified by tail docking (Fig. 1) there was no effect of time of recording on values or treatment means. There was no difference in either weight or weight gain between the groups. The puppies submitted to tail docking gained 35 g and the puppies that were not submitted to tail docking gained

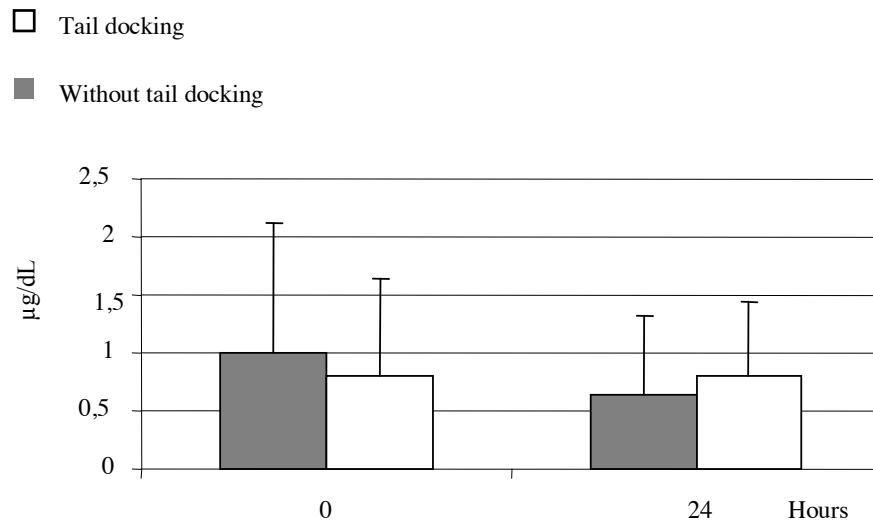
32 g (Fig. 2). All puppies vocalised during tail amputation even with local anaesthesia performed from the dorsal to the ventral region of the tail. There was no significant difference in plasma cortisol concentrations either between the groups or before and after 24 hours of tail docking (Fig. 3). There was no statistical difference between the groups for behavioural and all other neurological reflexes.



**Figure 1** - Mean (SD) of respiratory rate of dog neonates before and during the first 24 hours after tail docking



**Figure 2** - Mean (SD) of weight of dog neonates before and 24 hours after tail docking



**Figure 3** - Mean (SD) of plasma cortisol concentration of dog neonates before and 24 hours after tail docking.

## DISCUSSION

Although tail docking is usually performed in clinical practice without local anaesthesia, local anaesthesia was used in this study for ethical reasons, as a request from the Ethical Committee for Animal Experimentation. Puppies of both groups received epidural anaesthesia in order to avoid differences in behaviour or in physiological and neurological variables due to manipulation and possible effects of anaesthesia itself in only one group. However, the puppies vocalised during tail amputation even with local anaesthesia, probably due to manipulation and/or pain associated with the surgery. As soon as the procedure was over and they were placed with the bitch, they started sucking. This sucking behaviour has previously been described as displacement behaviour

to minimise the perception of pain (WIEPKEMA, 1987), as sucking stimulates the release of endorphins from the brain, producing analgesia (BLASS et al., 1987, NOONAN et al., 1996).

Our data indicate that tail docking did not modify behavioural, physiological and neurological signs. It is of note, however, that in this study the animals were observed for only 24 hours, and differences might be observed after a longer period of evaluation; hence long-term changes should be further investigated. Late complications might be related to the surgery itself, such as neuroma formation and post-operative complications, which have been described in docked lambs (FRENCH & MORGAN, 1992). The occurrence of sepsis resulting from tail infection and the possibility of anal sphincter damage (GROSS & CARR, 1990) are consequences that need further



investigation. Another point in the adverse effects of tail amputation is that the association between docking and incompetence of the urethral sphincter was consistent, not as a causal relationship, but rather as an indication that docked breeds may develop more urinary incontinence than undocked breeds, either because of breed predisposition or because docking can affect urethral nerve supply (HOLT & THURFIELD, 1993).

Cortisol is a hormone responsible for the increase in metabolism of proteins, carbohydrates and fats and it also minimises any over reaction of the defence mechanisms activated by stress that could be harmful to body homeostasis. Plasma cortisol concentrations are not necessarily a pain reflex *per se*, but may simply indicate stress associated with restraint and handling (GUYTON & HALL, 2000, JONGMAN et al., 2000). However, a correlation between high plasma cortisol concentration and abnormal behaviour associated with pain after tail docking was observed in lambs (MELLOR & MURRAY, 1989).

In our study all animals were restrained in the same way for administration of epidural anaesthesia and for simulation of tail docking, even in the puppies that were not docked. Epidural anaesthesia may have blocked a surgical stress response caused by tail amputation, as there was no increase in plasma cortisol concentrations after this procedure. Another possible approach would be to measure plasma cortisol concentration immediately after tail docking and repeat thereafter, as a possible cortisol increase could have disappeared by 24 hours. However the restraint of the puppy and the volume of blood in small breed dogs might be a limiting factor.

Although tail docking did not modify the endocrine, behavioural, physiological and neurological variables in newborn dogs for 24 hours, epidural anaesthesia may have masked a potentially harmful effect of tail docking on these variables.

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## Canine Tail Docking (FAQ)

### Q: Why did we start docking dogs' tails?

A: Tail docking of dogs is believed to have arisen for three reasons at different points in history. In ancient times Romans believed that amputation of the tail tip and/or parts of the dog's tongue could prevent a dog from contracting rabies.<sup>1,2</sup> Because the tail was believed to help a dog in the chase, dogs were historically cropped if they were owned by a poor person not permitted to hunt game.<sup>2</sup> (Ironically, it is sometimes argued that docking increases a dog's strength or speed.<sup>3</sup>) There is a continuing tradition of docking working dogs' tails with the goal of preventing tail injury during activities such as hunting (see related question below). Early references, however, tended to suggest docking only in cases where the tail was overly long for the size of the animal and, therefore, might be prone to injury.<sup>4</sup>

### Q: When did tail docking for cosmetic purposes begin?

A: Tail docking seems to have emerged for a variety of reasons, but for some breeds it was proposed primarily to improve appearance. Books from different periods openly refer to docking of some breeds as a matter of pleasing appearance (e.g., *The American Book of the Dog*, 1891, p. 619, 669<sup>5</sup>; also<sup>6</sup>). The most consistent anecdotal argument for preventive docking relates to hunting with pointers; even in this case, however, the purpose of increasing 'beauty' is mentioned.<sup>15</sup> Rules for pedigreed dog shows in the United States established during the mid-1950s formalized the docking tradition within some breed fancies regardless of the origin of the practice.

The history of veterinary opposition to cosmetic tail docking is long. One example from the United States being characterization of cosmetic tail docking as "indefensible" in *The Dog* by Youatt & Lewis (1854).<sup>7</sup> Most veterinarians worldwide tend not to support routine, cosmetic tail docking as part of a breed standard;<sup>8,9,10</sup> however, there is a lack of data relating specifically to the attitudes of veterinarians in the United States and there are dissenting opinions (just as some breeders have opposed docking in breeds where this is traditional<sup>11</sup>).

The AVMA first suggested breed clubs remove cosmetic alterations from breed standards in 1976, although the presence and phrasing of this recommendation within the Association's policy has varied over the years. Opposition to tail docking is also the stated policy of other veterinary associations (e.g., Canada,<sup>12</sup> Australia,<sup>13</sup> United

Kingdom<sup>14</sup>).

**Q: What is the current basis for carrying out preventive tail amputation/partial amputation on working dogs?**

A: Some commentators consider a long tail to be a potential hazard for some breeds of working dogs. For example, it has been suggested that:

- A guard dog could be seized by the tail to thwart its attack.<sup>15</sup>
- Hunting dogs, such as pointers, may damage their tail tip in underbrush.<sup>7,4,16</sup>
- Long-haired dogs may become more soiled if they have a hanging tail.<sup>17</sup>

These justifications for docking working dogs' tails lack substantial scientific support, with the exception of some suggestive, but inconclusive, data relating to German Shorthaired Pointers before and after a docking ban in Sweden.<sup>18</sup> Differences between breeds that are docked and those that are not are often minor. For example among the very similar Pointer, German Longhaired Pointer and German Shorthaired Pointer, only the German Shorthaired Pointer is traditionally docked.<sup>19</sup> Some argue that subtle differences in the morphologic types of their tails justify this distinction. Docking of toy spaniels' tails, such as those of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, is now allowed, but was not typically performed in the ancestral breeds.<sup>20</sup>

**Q: Why is tail docking currently carried out on non-working dogs?**

A: Tail docking of some breeds may be based on a belief that their non-working members experience risks similar to working dogs; more commonly, however, it is to conform to a distinctive breed appearance or standard. Survey data indicate that preventive tail docking of pet dogs is unnecessary.<sup>21</sup> Therefore tail docking of non-working dogs, even if their breed was originally developed for working purposes, is considered a cosmetic procedure unless evidence exists to the contrary.

**Q: Do dogs need to have tails?**

A: It is natural for most dogs to have tails based upon their descent from a tailed species. However there is no strong evidence that naturally bobbed or surgically docked dogs are physically or psychologically disadvantaged. There is some early, but inconclusive, data that raises questions as to whether docking impairs communication with other dogs<sup>22</sup> or may increase the risk of developing incontinence.<sup>23</sup>

**Q: Is tail docking painful?**

A: Tailing docking is painful.<sup>24</sup> The intensity or duration of the pain under ideal or typical circumstances is difficult to quantify.

**Q: Why does AVMA policy oppose cosmetic tail docking?**

A: The essential question is not "How harmful is the procedure?", but rather "Is there sufficient justification for performing it?" Performing a surgical procedure for cosmetic purposes (i.e., for the sake of appearance) implies the procedure is not medically indicated. Because dogs have not been shown to derive self-esteem or pride in appearance from having their tails docked (common reasons for performing cosmetic procedures on people), there is no obvious benefit to our patients in performing this procedure. The only benefit that appears to be derived from cosmetic tail docking of dogs is the owner's impression of a pleasing appearance. In the opinion of the AVMA, this is insufficient justification for performing a surgical procedure.

**Q: What forms of tail removal would not be considered cosmetic?**

A: The naturally bobbed animal is not considered "docked." Bobbed genetics exist in many pedigreed breeds (e.g., Old English Sheepdog, Australian Shepherd<sup>17</sup>) and have been introduced into others (e.g., Boxer<sup>25</sup>). Some breeders, both historically and currently, would prefer problematic conformation to be corrected via breeding alone.

Removal of a dog's tail for medical reasons is not referred to as "docking." The most common reason for amputation or partial amputation of a dog's tail is traumatic injury where repair of the entire tail is not possible or advisable. Amputation may also occur in the case of tail deformities that negatively impact a dog's function or increase risk of injury. An argument might be made for removal of the tail of a dog on the basis of repeated prior injury.

Precautionary removal of the tail of a young puppy needs to be based on compelling evidence that the animal is at high risk of tail trauma due to congenital defect, breed and/or planned working activity. However, such a justification should be supported by evidence such as empirical data or impartial expert opinion based on extensive, directly relevant experience.

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## EDITORIAL

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# A happy tail

FOR over 20 years the BSAVA has been pressing the Government for a ban on tail docking for cosmetic reasons, and since then firm support for this stance has been reiterated at several BSAVA and BVA Council meetings. It was not primary British legislation that has finally brought about the ban on tail docking except by veterinary surgeons from July 1993, but the ratification of a clause in the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Companion Animals. Contrary to the advice of the BVA and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the Government has not made the docking of tails for non-therapeutic reasons illegal, but has neatly passed the buck by deeming that the procedure may only be carried out by a veterinary surgeon. And there the problem rests firmly in the lap of our profession until 1993.

In 1974 the RCVS declared tail docking for cosmetic purposes unethical, although held back from pronouncing it evidence of that most chilling of damnations – 'conduct disgraceful in a professional respect' as long as the law permitted lay persons to carry out the procedure. It remains to be seen if the RCVS will now hold to the courage of its convictions and effectively ban cosmetic tail docking completely.

Hell hath no fury like a breeder scorned, and the canine press has unleashed an invective of abuse upon the veterinary profession spear-headed by screaming headlines: 'Why Dog Vets (sic) Are Riding For A Fall', 'Show them who the real governors are' and 'Hit them in the pocket!' My eyes water, but the feedback from my pet-owning clientele is firmly in favour of the ban, with a surprising number of owners positively shocked to be informed that their little Yorkie had ever had a bit of its tail chopped off in the first place.

Let us pause to look at objections to a ban. The evidence to prove that working dogs are more

prone to tail injuries seems very flimsy indeed, but even if this were accepted, I have yet to hear breeders arguing that docking should be restricted to those breeds that are likely to injure their tail due to the nature of their work. How many Yorkshire terriers and miniature poodles are going to injure their tails working in thick bush? If breed societies were able to prove a prophylactic advantage for tail docking in certain working breeds then the RCVS could consider allowing veterinary surgeons to continue to dock those breeds on the grounds that it was not being carried out for cosmetic purposes alone.

It is claimed that British dogs that are exported will have their tails docked as adults. Many potential problems face exported dogs and the responsible breeder will go to great lengths to ensure they pass only into the most trustworthy of hands. But if we are to produce dogs to meet foreign fashions then we shall soon see the return of ear cropping.

Tail docking is far from the most important welfare issue facing the veterinary profession today, yet most members of the profession share a repugnance at the thought of cutting off a perfectly healthy and useful part of the dog's anatomy purely for the sake of fashion. The battle has been won, but the pause until the armistice comes into effect is drawn out over the next 18 months. We will come under increasing pressure from some breeders and we must be temperate to ensure that all the progress that has been made in working together to produce healthier puppies is not lost. Yet we must stick to our principles, stand firm, and encourage the RCVS to pursue the issue to its logical conclusion. Now is certainly not the time to allow the tail to wag the dog, but hopefully we can look forward to many more dogs wagging a tail.

BRADLEY VINER



# Tail docking – the long and the short of it

IT is hoped that most, if not all, members of BSAVA support the ending of routine docking of puppies' tails. It has been a long standing aim of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons when it was declared unethical some years back, so it should not be a new concept for most of us. BSAVA policy has been to support the RCVS in its aim to get primary legislation passed banning the procedure of routine docking completely and has held the view for a long time that the act is a mutilation. Despite this, the debate has waged for many months and there are claims that the profession is divided; in theory it is.

Our own survey carried out at the beginning of 1992 showed that 90 per cent of those that replied were in favour of the changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act and to the position of the RCVS. This is an overwhelming vote of confidence by any standards. A recent survey by the Council of Docked Breeds had a very similar result, ie, 9 per cent were against the ban. However one extrapolates from this it seems likely that there are at least 100 practising veterinary surgeons who will continue to dock. The quoted figure of 700 veterinary surgeons willing to defy the ban is based on 9 per cent of 8000 practising veterinary surgeons. This is surely very optimistic in real terms. Whatever the true number, strict rules apply to those who now choose to dock as laid out in the new edition of the RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct.

Reasons given for docking are the tail injuries suffered by working dogs; hygiene problems of long, shaggy-coated breeds; tail injuries to dogs with 'gay tails'; and falling breed standards as the genetic pool diminishes. It is suggested that in docked breeds there has not been any selection for tail length, carriage, and shape and that future

selections for these in preference to other things may lead to an increase in hereditary diseases. Some breeds may even disappear!

The RSPCA at its press conference on July 1 supported the ban and noted its satisfaction that the procedure will cease. Case reports mentioned the appalling injuries inflicted by people using such tools as knives and scissors because they thought that their dog ought to be docked. The maximum fine if a lay person docks is now £5000.

Also present at the press conference was a weimaraner and an old English sheep dog both with long tails to wag. There was no sign of a damaged tail end or a messy bottom.

A most interesting story heard on July 1 puts another slant on this issue. Three old school friends, one a veterinary surgeon, the others doctors, were having a drink when the subject of tail docking arose. The veterinary surgeon told the story of the weimaraner owner who was asked how she had managed to get her dog's tail to grow so long. The friends did not get the point. Imagine the disgust when they were informed that weimaraners, boxers, Yorkshire terriers, cocker spaniels, etc (not all 47 customarily docked breeds was listed) have their tails removed soon after birth.

It is clear that we, as a profession, need to stand firm in our resolve to end docking and at the same time educate the public that all dogs are born with long tails. This ethical commitment will be vigorously challenged over the next few months until breeders accept that docking is a thing of the past.

CLIFF ALDERMAN  
*Chairman, PR Committee*



We thank the staff from the AAHL, Geelong for providing and assisting with the development of the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay. We also thank our colleagues from Agriculture Western Australia's Animal Health Laboratories and its Vertebrate Pest Research Services sections for their assistance with various aspects of this study. This work was partially supported by the Cooperative Research Centre for Vertebrate Pest Populations.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

### Tail docking in dogs

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In his adverse criticism of the paper by RK Wansbrough,<sup>1</sup> Dr IC Davey addresses somewhat indirectly the evidence concerning the relationship between docking and sphincter mechanism incompetence in bitches,<sup>2</sup> a topic which we presented in our earlier paper.<sup>3</sup> He is correct in stating that there have been 'no trials that have shown an increased incidence of urinary incontinence in breeds whose tails have been docked'. Such trials would be epidemiological cohort studies and would need to last about 7 years and study representatives of both docked and undocked dogs in each breed. Using standard sample-size formulae,<sup>4</sup> and assuming a cumulative incidence of 1% in undocked dogs during the period of the study, at least 5000 dogs would be required in each breed to detect a two-fold increase in risk in docked dogs (statistical significance = 5%; statistical power = 80%). Such a study is unlikely to take place. Cohort studies, in general, are rare, and medical and veterinary science has refined the more common cross-sectional and case-control studies to address problems which lack rigorous investigation. Carefully conducted, these are efficient screening techniques for risk factors and can provide evidence of causality.<sup>5</sup> Our paper is one such study. Using two different data-sets we identified an association between docking and incompetence of the urethral sphincter mechanism, after adjusting for potential confounders. In our conclusions, however, we urged caution in definitely implying causality. We should point out that Dr Wansbrough's statement

'docked breeds of whatever size are more likely to develop incontinence than undocked dogs of the same breed' cannot be concluded from our paper. Nevertheless, one interpretation of the association is that it is causal, and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it would surely be imprudent to ignore this evidence out of hand. To do so would imply prejudice.

Dr Davey failed to comment on the possible relationship between tail injuries and the presence of an entire tail – a possible justification of docking – although the topic was addressed by Wansbrough, who cited the short communication by Darke and colleagues.<sup>6</sup> In this epidemiological study of over 12,000 dogs, a reduced risk of tail injuries in docked dogs was not demonstrated. This study did not stratify according dogs' 'occupation' (working or non-working) and so could not rule out the possibility of a protective effect of docking specifically in working dogs. However, in the absence of a definitive cohort study in which 'occupation' is the main explanatory variable (again, a highly unlikely event), this study provides the only rigorous evidence, in dogs generally, that docking does not have a protective effect. Extrapolation from a general to a specific case is not without its dangers, but is sounder than unsubstantiated speculation and anecdotal evidence such as Dr Davey's statement that 'as practitioners know, breeds with long tails such as Dalmatians and the Setter family are increasingly common sufferers from this problem [acquired urinary incontinence]'.

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## CORRECTIONS

**Effect of a single bout of high intensity exercise on lower respiratory tract contamination in the horse**, by Raidal SL, Love DN and Bailey GD, *Aust Vet J* 1997;75:293-295.

The columns depicting post-exercise samples are the second and fourth from the left of the graph.

**Effect of breed of cattle on innate resistance to infection with *Babesia bovis*, *B bigemina* and *Anaplasma marginale***, by Bock RE, de Vos AJ, Kingston TG and McLellan DJ, *Aust Vet J* 1997;75:337-340.

As a result of incompatibility between computer programs, some symbols have been changed thorough the article. For 'fi' read '1/2' and for 'j' read '1/4'. Corrected reprints are available from the Scientific Editor.

# AVA'S campaign to stop tail docking

**T**HE AVA last month launched an important Australia-wide campaign to attract community support for the ACT Government's proposed legislation outlawing cosmetic tail docking.

The Board aims to have the campaign trigger a flood of genuine letters from veterinarians, their clients and the general public in support of the first attempt by an Australian legislature to introduce such a measure. It is strongly believed that once such legislation gains a foothold in Australia it will ultimately spread to all States and Territories. The campaign involved a number of strategic media releases and a detailed information sheet sent to key media and opinion leaders around the nation. The National President, Dr Garth McGilvray, led the charge but was backed-up, where required, by senior people in each Division. One aim of the campaign was to prevent the anticipated campaign of orchestrated responses from docked breed groups that would seek to convince

the ACT Government the idea had no merit and no support. AVA adopted the view that most Australians had never really thought about the issue BUT when presented with the stark reality that the barbaric practice is cruel, painful and unnecessary they would be likely to get angry about its continuation in their communities. AVA urges practitioners to raise the issue with their clients to try to rally support behind the ACT Minister for Urban Services, Mr Brendan Smyth (pronounced Smith) in his bid to be the first politician in Australia to initiate a law banning cosmetic tail docking. The proposed ACT law is officially open for public comment until the end of this month. Send a letter today – or you might miss the opportunity to help create a whole new community view on this significant animal welfare issue.

The address for support letters is: *Attn: Ms Tamsin Davies, Office of Mr Brendan Smyth, ACT Minister for Urban Services, GPO Box 1020, CANBERRA 2601.*

## Sutherland's AVJ gift

**T**HE family of the late Dr A. K. "Sandy" Sutherland, has kindly donated his full collection of *Australian Veterinary Journals* – every edition printed up to the time of his death in October – to the AVA. Dr Sutherland was a major figure in the Association and the profession.

He was a Life Fellow of the AVA, was National President, had served as President of both the Queensland and Victorian Divisions at different stages of his career.

He also won the Gilruth Prize, the Association's highest award, in 1979.

Another significant involvement with the AVA was his work as Editor of the *AVJ* between 1966 and 1972.

Dr Sutherland was still an active volunteer member of the Melbourne-based Editorial Committee up to the time of his death.

## GST UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2000

*This update reflects some recent ATO developments:*

### Draft business activity statement

The Tax Office has issued a draft of the Business Activity Statement ('BAS'). The aim of the BAS is to bring together the reporting and payment of a wide range of business tax entitlements and obligations under the New Tax System. It will replace several existing Tax Office forms from 1 July 2000.

Businesses will be required to remit quarterly tax instalments, net payments under the GST, the PAYG system, the FBT system, the wine equalisation tax, the luxury car tax and to claim refunds of wholesale sales tax (see point (4) below). A draft BAS form and the accompanying 118-page instructions are available on the Tax Office's Tax Reform site at [www.taxreform.ato.gov.au](http://www.taxreform.ato.gov.au)

### Input tax credit without a tax invoice

A ruling sets out the circumstances in which the Tax Office will exercise discretion under

the GST Act to allow an entity to claim an input credit without holding a tax invoice. The ruling relaxes the requirements for documents issued before 1 July 2000 to the extent that the price of the taxable supply does not have to be shown if the amount of GST payable is shown.

The ruling provides that an entity is entitled to an input tax credit for a creditable acquisition without holding a tax invoice where:

- the entity holds a document issued before 1 July 2000 for a taxable supply made on or after that date;
- the document contains the following information:
  - the supplier's name or trading name;
  - the supplier's address; and
  - the date of issue; and
- the document shows either:
  - the price of the taxable supply and a statement indicating that the price includes GST; or
  - the amount of the GST payable.

## Oops! AVJ readers pass our January "test"

**A** NUMBER of *AVJ* readers passed our 'secret' test in the January edition – spotting the incorrect photo used in one of the news stories. Unfortunately, the Editor was not among them! Due to an inadvertent production error, compounded by the rush to ensure the January issue was completed early to avoid Christmas shutdowns, we managed to change the appearance of the new Victorian Opposition Leader, Mr Denis Naphthine, by running a picture from an unpub-

lished story in his spot (on page 6). The second victim of this mix-up was Dr Graeme Allan, a prominent Sydney vet, recently appointed as Adjunct Professor of Veterinary Radiology at Sydney University. We now present an actual photograph of Mr Naphthine – as supplied and certified by his personal staff. Our apologies to both men – and thanks to the generosity of spirit of those victims and readers who passed the above-mentioned test for finding some humour in the situation.



Mr Denis Naphthine

## Docking ban a non-issue to Scandinavian breeders

**T**HE biggest Finnish daily newspaper recently ran a story about the effects of the ban of puppy docking. Along with other Nordic countries, Finland made cosmetic tail amputation illegal for anything but medical reasons in 1996.

Dog owners and breeders interviewed in a dog show were mostly satisfied that the puppies are able to stay intact. Most had harboured serious doubts before the ban, but found no problems with tails after they were left intact. Would they start having the dogs docked again, given the chance? Absolutely not, was the answer of all except one, who used to get his livelihood from importing docked dogs from Eastern European countries, where the practice is still legal.

I spoke with Dr Tapani Parviainen, Chief of Veterinary Services in southern Finland, about the docking issue. He explained that the ban was preceded by intense lobbying by some breeders. Their main concern was that docked dogs would seem odd and would therefore not be appreciated by judges in international competitions. I mentioned the stories, circulating in Australia, about the alleged damage to full tails in previously docked breeds. Dr Parviainen had a good laugh. According to him the unequivocal



experience in Scandinavia is that docking is merely a cosmetic operation with no significance in preventing tail injuries.

For a period after the ban came into force, some breeders took their pregnant bitches to Estonia to whelp. The puppies were then brought back without tails. Now this trade has been banned. In addition to all Scandinavian countries, the UK and several States and Cantons in Germany, Switzerland and Austria have forbidden docking, and the EU has expressed a negative stand on the practice. The American Veterinary Medical Association has this year started to lobby for banning cosmetic tail amputation in the USA. The Scandinavian dogscape has permanently changed. A long-tailed Boxer or Old English Sheepdog no longer catches anyone's attention. In contrast, a rare canine amputee appears awkward and incomplete.

## UK and France still at 'war' over BSE

**B**BRITISH authorities report that the incidence of mad-cow disease is gradually diminishing. In the first half of 1999, about 24% fewer cases were diagnosed than in a similar period the previous year. The number of cattle culled during last 12 months for BSE was 5% of that slaughtered in 1995, the peak year of the epidemic. In all, 37% of British beef herds have had BSE.

French authorities, steadfastly opposing the importation of British beef on the grounds of consumer safety, point out that the diminished incidence still represents some 3000 cattle, whereas in France the number of cattle diagnosed in 1999 was in the low 20s. This is ammunition for the continuing cross-channel war of words. The British emphasise that regardless of the absolute numbers, their incidence is going down and the French numbers are possibly growing.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Europe, BSE incidence is increasing for the time being. In Switzerland cases numbered about 30 in 1999. More alarmingly, Portugal had over

130, up from 12 cases in 1994 and 106 in 1998. The European Commission has reported shortcomings in the country's BSE control measures. The continuation of the export ban of Portuguese beef will be decided in early 2000.

The squabbling over BSE may occasionally be farcical, but the casualty rate of Creutzfeld-Jakob disease is deadly serious. The variant close to BSE has claimed 48 lives since 1995, all but one in the UK. British-based *Animal Pharm* news magazine reported in December that the latest person to fall ill with this deadly disease was a 13-year-old girl. Her age causes doubts about the incubation period and other features of the disease. It is possible that more deaths may follow for some time, as BSE may have contaminated an unknown number of human vaccines in the 1980s, when the threat was not recognised.

In view of all this, it was a pleasure to note that Australia's official freedom of BSE and scrapie made news here in November.

## Winter blues in the frozen north of Europe

**F**INNISH vets do not need to treat tick paralysis or sunburn.

Leaving pets inside a car would rather cause hypothermia than heat stroke in this climate.

The season's speciality is frostbite. The temperatures are down to -30°C in

Lapland, and we are enjoying brisk winter weather even here in the south.

Frostbite affects the dog's ear and tail tips, and in an especially nasty way, the scrotum.

There hardly is a more pathetic sight than a Whippet on a cold, snowy

morning.

Despite being carefully rugged they seem almost to shake their joints loose.

In contrast, Huskies and other arctic breeds enjoy their natural environment immensely.

(By Jouko Koppinen, former Scientific Editor of AVJ).

## EU stays tough on hormone beef, somatotropin and most antibiotics

**T**HE European Commission's ban of beef from hormone-treated cattle is unlikely to change. Preliminary findings from still continuing scientific studies seem to confirm the risks for the consumer, and the EU is expected to maintain its cautious stand in this issue. The World Trade Organisation had earlier declared the EC's ban illegal.

The Commission decided to continue to prohibit the use and marketing of bovine somatotropin. It agreed with the earlier scientific report, according to which treating dairy cattle with the hormone would increase the number of foot problems and mastitis cases, thus compromising the welfare of treated animals.

It seems that soon there will be only three antibiotics registered as growth promoters for animals in the EU, as the Commission considers scientific recommendations to ban avilamycin. While the pharmaceutical industry vehemently rejects the arguments for the ban, the Commission is already reflecting on how to phase out the remaining three.

Continued from page 205

Pomeranians – and daintily lead them around the park, a park to which beggars and other “undesirables” are refused entry. The servants avoid eye contact with those on the other side of the fence and pretend not to notice as the dogs defaecate beneath the swings and urinate on the roses. Their constitutional over, eight canine feet are fastidiously wiped clean, coats are brushed and the party departs in air-conditioned comfort.

The discussion about responsible pet ownership in the Australian veterinary and general communities continues. Should not we, as a profession, be discussing what level of pet care is compatible with responsible global citizenship? As we walk our pampered pooches through Australia’s well-tended parks, gardens and state forests, do we avoid the eyes of the developing world? Do we avert our eyes and pretend that the millions left unable to feed their children, access the most basic education, or even purchase a life-saving course of amoxicillin, are neither our problem nor our responsibility?

Across a fence (or across cultures, nationalities, socioeconomic groups or hemispheres) distance may insulate us – but it doesn’t dilute the injustice of the world nor lessen the obligation inherent in our privilege and opportunity. What standard of pet care is “responsible” and what is “immoral”? When does kindness to animals become, even if indirectly, cruelty to people?

**Dr Deborah Storie,**  
dstorie@virtual.net.au

## Letters

### Anti-docking website

IT was wonderful to read your views on tail docking. I am very much opposed to docking and believe it is about time it was banned. It has been successfully outlawed in Europe and I would love to see Australia follow suit.

I work as an assistant in a veterinary practice and am developing my own anti-docking website. My parents work in the Internet industry and are helping me with the project. When it is finished I would love to hear the views of AVA members about the site and its contents. The main things it will feature are a video of a vet actually performing a docking procedure so that people can see how it really is done and to show that the pups do feel pain – contrary to what the pro-dockers say. It will also have pictures of dogs from breeds that have traditionally been docked but with their tails intact – so that people can see what they should look like. The site will also carry extensive text on the subject. If your members or readers have any suggestions on what else I can put on the site that might help the anti-docking cause, I would love to hear them. Keep up the wonderful work and good luck with your campaign to win support for the proposed ACT anti-docking legislation. I will be sending my letter to the Minister very soon and I hope your members can encourage a real flood of mail to help get an official ban underway.

**Kelly Maher,**  
kelly@smile.com.au

### Pups’ tails saved

WE want to express our gratitude to the AVA and to Dr Roger Clarke for convincing us to spare the tails of our newborn cocker spaniel pups from the pointless and painful process of docking.

We are not professional breeders but found ourselves in a situation where we discovered our dogs had become extremely friendly! From discussions in our local area, we learned that Dr Clarke had been waging a strong campaign against docking for many years and decided to seek his advice on what we should do with our pups. He made us aware of the AVA’s strong stance against docking as an utterly unnecessary – and unjustifiable – mutilation of a dog.

When our eight pups were born we were amazed at how gorgeous they were, especially how their natural tails made them even more attractive than the “modified” versions which most people now mistakenly believe are true cocker spaniels. We are now total converts to the anti-docking cause. It has been a great life experience for us – helping to give birth to these puppies and helping to nurture them. These past few weeks have been wonderful for us to share and we have been given memories that will last us forever.

We are frantically taking photographs of the pups at every opportunity so we can convince other people what beautiful animals they are. Most people think cocker spaniels are beautiful anyway, but we can now show those who are unaware that this breed has traditionally been mutilated at birth just how adorable they are when they are allowed to keep the tails nature gave

them. We have decided to send some photos of our litter to Dr Clarke for use in his important anti-docking work. Thanks again to Dr Clarke and the AVA. Keep up the good fight – we will do everything we can to ensure your “save the tails” message is heard by as many people as possible.

**John and Renea Goebel,**  
Gold Coast, Qld

### ‘Strange’ US idea

The anti-docking movement (and anti-ear cropping) is starting to swell in the US as well as in Australia and other countries. However, in an October 1999 issue of the JAVMA there is a very strange response from a vet in favour of docking stating that there is “no difference between cosmetic docking and spaying”. The letter said:

“Why do we support spaying if dogs have ‘more to lose’ (their reproductive function) in the operation whereas no function is lost with cosmetic docking”.

The writer appears to have neglected the importance of spaying and

Neutering in controlling the numbers of unwanted animals. I doubt if docking would lead to less strays.

I hope this very strange argument doesn’t enter the present campaign.

**Diane Ryan BVSc**

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### Correspondence

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# Tail docking ban inches a step closer

**M**oves to implement a nationwide ban on the cosmetic docking of dogs' tails came closer in April with Western Australia legislating to halt the practice, although full support from all States is yet to be obtained.

The AVA, whose policy is firmly against purely cosmetic tail docking, issued a media release (p246) condemning the failure of NSW and the Northern Territory to go along with a national ban at the Primary Industries Ministerial Council meeting of State Agriculture Ministers in Brisbane.

"There is no valid reason for an extension of time sought by NSW and NT, given such a groundswell of support in favour of a national ban and that the majority of States and Territories have committed at this meeting," said Dr Jo Toia, National AVA President.

Tail docking is usually performed on two to five-day old pups. The procedure is often carried out in a non-sterile environment by people lacking veterinary or surgical training, using scissors or a tight rubber band that cuts off circulation and causes the tail to die. A scientific paper in the April *AVJ* ("Tail docking in dogs: a review of the issues", *Aust Vet J* 81 4 p208) concluded that there was no adequate justification for cosmetic tail docking. The ACT prohibited the practice in November 2000.

Some politicians went to Brisbane expecting unanimous support. One, Victorian Minister for Agriculture Bob Cameron, had said he was confident all States would implement bans.

"I want to see a national ban on the practice and I am confident that my interstate colleagues will support this view," he was quoted as saying. "I will begin to institute Victorian legislation to ban the practice as soon as national agreement is reached."

In the lead-up to the meeting of State Agriculture Ministers, Veterinary Science

**Anne Quain (left) and fellow students, members of the group Veterinary Science for Animal Welfare, say 'No' to tail docking at VSAW's anti-docking event at the University of Sydney on April 9.**



## WA bans tail docking

**New regulations to ban the cosmetic amputation of dogs' tails came into effect in Western Australia on April 4. Local Government and Regional Development Minister Tom Stephens said the regulations prohibited the docking of a tail unless performed by a registered veterinarian for therapeutic or prophylactic purposes. He said the decision followed an extended consultation period and took into account the deliberations of a working group on tail docking. Stephens said veterinarians would be banned from removing the whole of a dog's tail unless it was for health**

for Animal Welfare, a student group within the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney, added its voice to the push for a national ban. Anne Quain, President of VSAW, said that as future veterinarians, students were against tail docking for cosmetic purposes because it is cruel and unnecessary.

"The fact that it is painful and can cause medical complications is further reason to ban the practice," she said. VSAW organised a meeting at the University of Sydney on April 9 that heard Associate Professor Dr Geraldine Hunt, head of

reasons or in circumstances where the tail had been severely damaged through injury.

"I recognise that a wide range of views exist within the community about this issue," he said. "However, there is no valid reason to amputate dogs' tails for cosmetic purposes. The days of tail docking for cosmetic purposes and making grooming easier are surely gone, particularly when it can be a very painful process if performed without anaesthetic.

"It is also widely recognised that dogs' tails are important for canine communication and balance."

small animal surgery at the university's Sydney Clinic, talk about the medical indications for tail amputation. Nearly 100 people, including about 70 members of VSAW wearing T-shirts against tail docking, attended. The T-shirts, designed by third year vet student Kelly Gilbert, had the words "Fancy a stubbie? No thanks!" and a picture of a tail-waving dog on the front, and "Dog Tails Mean Happy Endings!" and "Say NO to tail docking" on the back. Quain said the group sold more than 100 of the \$15 T-shirts in two days.

# Tail docking in dogs: can attitude change be achieved?

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The debate about tail docking in domestic dogs continues to rage in many developed countries and attitudes expressed by different community groups remain diametrically opposed. Veterinary associations and welfare organisations typically want the practice banned, while many breeders and pure-bred dog associations just as vigorously oppose the introduction of anti-docking legislation. In recent years, much data have been accumulated concerning the welfare implications of tail docking. A recent evaluation of this literature suggests that the practice has little to recommend it and that, in the absence of reasonable case-by-case justification, it may constitute an unacceptable abuse of a sentient species. Given this situation, it is difficult to understand why many canine interest groups, presumably representing those people who care most about the welfare of companion dogs, should continue to hold such strong attitudes in favour of tail docking. In this review we attempt to explain why different community groups might espouse strong but opposing attitudes, despite having access to the same information. We argue that the theory of cognitive dissonance, popular among social psychologists, may provide a useful framework within which to understand, and attempt to alter, attitudes that persist even though they appear contrary to available empirical evidence.

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The issue of tail docking in domestic dogs is complex, involving economic, aesthetic, welfare and moral considerations. It seems, however, that the practice is associated with few, if any, benefits, and that it may cause both acute and chronic harm to at least some dogs. In a recent review<sup>1</sup> we argued that tail docking can only be defended when clear benefits accrue to the individual dog. Thus, it may be appropriate to dock specific dogs expected to engage in activities as adults in which tail damage is encountered on a frequent basis, particularly if appropriate veterinary care is unlikely to be available. It may also be appropriate to dock individual dogs in which accumulation of faecal material may become a significant health issue, those that are born with deformed or painfully misshapen tails, and those for which the presence of a docked tail may result in a significantly improved quality of life. In these cases tail docking could potentially be justified on utilitarian grounds, particularly if adequate anaesthesia and analgesia is provided at the time of docking.

Impossible to justify, however, is the widespread practice of docking all members of a given breed. Widespread tail docking cannot be defended on the basis of arguments from tradition or to satisfy breed standards created in another time and place, when little was known about animal central nervous system functioning and very little regard was paid to animal welfare considerations. It also cannot be justified simply because some humans prefer the docked look or find it more convenient to own a tail-less dog. This would constitute an acceptable reason for docking only if it was conclusively demonstrated that absolutely no harm is ever associated with the process. On the

contrary, although the existence of pain and suffering in any animal cannot be conclusively proven scientifically for philosophical reasons, available evidence strongly suggests that docking may be associated with both acute and chronic pain. There is no reason to suspect that even very young pups do not experience substantial pain when their tails are removed. Nor is it likely that they avoid the pain experienced by other organisms as the normal physiological processes known to be associated with limb amputation take place. That the docking process occurs just before the critical socialisation period, and may leave at least some puppies in pain during this period, simply makes the practice more difficult to justify, as does the fact that it may leave some dogs with chronic physical problems and possibly unable to communicate effectively with both conspecifics and humans. Even if these adverse consequences have not been 'proven' beyond doubt to exist, the potential for harm associated with tail docking is sufficiently great for the burden of proof to be upon those who would dock tails, to prove that no harmful effects are associated with the procedure. In the absence of such evidence, we concluded that widespread tail docking should not be condoned by our community.<sup>1</sup>

Given this state of affairs one can understand moves by veterinary associations and welfare bodies to have the practice of tail docking banned. Indeed, one might wonder why legislation should be necessary to curtail a practice that is, at the very least, suspected to cause pain and which also seems to lack any reasonable countering justification. Yet, paradoxically, those who defend tail docking most strenuously include many individual dog breeders and many pure-bred dog associations, presumably representing those people who care most about the welfare of our canine companions. Perhaps, as described above, there are times when tail docking should be recommended on utilitarian grounds and this may explain why a total ban has not, thus far, been supported by canine advocates. To explain why many breeders continue to routinely dock all puppies, despite having access to the information provided by veterinarians, scientists and welfare organisations, requires a stronger argument, however, and it may be necessary to go beyond the practice itself to look at psychological theories concerning attitudes and the factors that make some attitudes extremely resistant to change. In this paper we argue that the theory of cognitive dissonance, popular among social psychologists, may provide one useful framework within which to understand, and attempt to alter, attitudes that persist even though they appear contrary to available empirical evidence.

## Cognitive dissonance theory

The theory of cognitive dissonance is one of the most influential theories in social psychology.<sup>2,3</sup> It was first proposed in 1957 by Leon Festinger,<sup>4</sup> who noted that people often behave in ways that are incompatible with their stated attitudes or beliefs. Similarly, people frequently possess or endorse two or more units of knowledge (cognitions) that seem incompatible or dissonant (disagree) with each other. Festinger<sup>4</sup> believed that when cogni-

tions are dissonant with each other, or with subsequent behaviours or actions, this causes psychological discomfort, and that people are highly motivated to avoid or reduce such discomfort by trying to eliminate the dissonance that exists between their cognitions and/or actions. Reduction of dissonance is an important factor in explanations of attitude and behaviour change. Strategies to reduce dissonance, most of which occur unconsciously, typically underlie many changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Paradoxically, however, the same processes can lead to cognitive rigidity, whereby a person maintains existing beliefs, despite strong evidence suggesting they are mistaken, resulting in a profound resistance to attitude or behaviour change.

According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, there are several ways in which dissonance can be reduced. These are typically divided into direct and indirect methods.<sup>5,6</sup> One direct way in which dissonance can be reduced is for the person to alter one of the dissonant elements. This may involve behavioural change but, because behaviour is typically highly resistant to change, this strategy generally concerns a change in attitude or opinion.<sup>5</sup> A second direct strategy requires that the person either reject new cognitions that are dissonant with those already held or add cognitions that are consonant with one's existing knowledge base. Whereas people wishing to accurately understand new information tend to process it impartially, those wishing to defend a preferred position tend to show a clear bias, focusing on information that supports their existing view and/or discredits the opposing view.<sup>7,9</sup> A third direct strategy is to devalue or trivialise the importance of dissonant cognitions, perhaps while simultaneously increasing the importance of other knowledge units.<sup>10</sup>

As an example of these strategies, Festinger<sup>4</sup> and Steele<sup>11</sup> have used the health conscious smoker who wishes to give up the habit. Many smokers simply do so, altering their behaviour in order to reduce the dissonance between this behaviour and their health-conscious attitudes. Those who feel unable to achieve behavioural change may reduce dissonance by selectively looking for pro-smoking information. They may dismiss anti-smoking campaigns as political propaganda and selectively read newspaper articles describing potential benefits of smoking such as stress relief. Alternatively, they may trivialise the smoking behaviour, convincing themselves that smoking is not so harmful as drinking alcohol, driving too fast, eating fatty foods or failing to exercise.

Indirect strategies to reduce dissonance typically involve either misattributing the uncomfortable psychological state to something else<sup>3,5</sup> or using various tactics to bolster self esteem and self worth, which are not directly related to reduction of existing dissonance.<sup>6,12</sup> Thus, the smoker may misattribute the discomfort felt while smoking to worry about time lost from other activities. Alternatively, they may be a good community citizen, a model parent and a dutiful employee, so that their inability to quit the smoking habit becomes less central to their self concept.<sup>11</sup>

The method selected to reduce dissonance, and the result of any strategies employed, depends on the degree to which any of the particular cognitions, attitudes or behaviours contributing to the dissonance are resistant to change. This, in turn, depends on several factors. One of these is the number of cognitions and/or attitudes with which the given cognition is incompatible. Hence, the same new dissonant knowledge element typically causes far more discomfort in a person with many opposing

knowledge elements and behaviours than in a person with few opposing knowledge elements and behaviours. Consider the teenager who smokes in the absence of any real evidence that it is damaging their health and the doctor who smokes despite being familiar with relevant health statistics and with people whose lives have been devastated by lung cancer. The teenager, according to Festinger's<sup>4</sup> theory, is likely to experience only mild smoking-related cognitive dissonance and, therefore, is poorly motivated to alter their behaviour or beliefs. In contrast, the doctor is likely to experience intense psychological discomfort and should be highly motivated to reduce the dissonance caused by their smoking habit.

Another factor that determines the level of dissonance caused by a given knowledge unit and the strategies used to reduce this dissonance concerns the relative importance of the cognitions to the individual.<sup>11</sup> Inconsistencies involving cognitions central to valued goals, or to the person's self concept, arouse particularly high levels of dissonance. Moreover, since cognitions central to the person's self concept are highly resistant to change, inconsistencies in this area are more likely to lead to the use of alternative strategies to reduce dissonance, such as distortion of conflicting information or trivialisation.<sup>10</sup> Additional relevant factors concern situations in which the individual feels personally responsible for behaviour that is counter-attitudinal or hypocritical,<sup>3</sup> when they publicly advocate one view but inadvertently practise another,<sup>6,8</sup> or when they freely behave in a way that has foreseeable aversive consequences for others.<sup>3,10</sup> Under these conditions dissonance is increased and the motivation to reduce it strengthened. Thus, the smoker who is extremely health conscious suffers more dissonance than one for whom health is a lower ranked value; the one who provides anti-smoking material to students suffers more than the one who works for a tobacco company; the one who chooses freely to smoke suffers more dissonance than the one who is encouraged to smoke by friends and family; and the one who knows smoking may have negative consequences for a co-habiting young child suffers more than the one who lives alone.

Dissonance is also likely to be substantial if a person engages in an unpleasant activity in order to obtain a desired outcome, since performing the behaviour is dissonant with its being unpleasant. To reduce this dissonance the person tends to later exaggerate the desirability of the outcome. This might occur, for example, when a person undergoes an unpleasant initiation process in order to join an exclusive group. This person, as described in Harmon-Jones and Mills,<sup>2</sup> tends later to rate the group as more important and more enjoyable than a person who did not have to undergo such an unpleasant initiation process. A similar phenomenon, the induced-compliance effect, occurs when somebody does or says something which is at odds with a prior belief or attitude, perhaps because of promised rewards or punishments.<sup>13</sup> When there is no choice about engaging in a counter-attitudinal behaviour, little dissonance is aroused. When a person lacks sufficient external justification for engaging in a counter-attitudinal behaviour, however, a great deal of cognitive dissonance results, leading to high motivation to reduce this dissonance via the strategies described previously.<sup>14</sup>

A consequence of cognitive dissonance, which is important in the present context, is that, when decisions are made difficult by the presence of many conflicting consonant and dissonant knowledge units, the person, once the decision is made, is highly motivated to reduce the resulting psychological discomfort. Such people tend to engage in a process called 'spreading



the alternatives'.<sup>2</sup> This means that they modify their existing knowledge units so that the option they selected becomes more desirable than it was initially, while the non-selected alternative becomes less desirable. They can, therefore, feel confident in the decision made, with over-confidence being a common consequence of this process.<sup>15</sup> A person deciding whether or not to take up smoking may initially consider that there are valid reasons both for and against. Once the difficult decision is made, however, they are more likely to emphasise the benefits of the chosen course of action, while simultaneously focusing on the likely costs associated with the rejected alternative. They are also likely to feel very confident in their view, whereas previously they were both undecided and uncertain.

### Cognitive dissonance theory applied to tail docking

Festinger's<sup>4</sup> theory provides a useful framework within which to examine the attitudes of various community groups towards tail docking in domestic dogs. On the one hand are the veterinarians and veterinary associations, whose attitudes towards docking appear to have changed quite markedly in recent years even though some veterinarians still earn part of their livelihood by performing tail docking procedures. One reason for the widespread anti-docking attitude may be that the recently accumulated anti-docking information is consonant with the existing knowledge structures possessed by veterinarians. Veterinarians are, almost by definition, concerned primarily with the health and welfare of animals, rather than with their appearance. They are strong public advocates for animal welfare issues, have a good knowledge of physiology and anatomy, a reasonable knowledge of accepted indices of animal pain, no real vested interest in maintaining breed standards or breed 'type' and an established respect for knowledge provided by scientists and other veterinary practitioners. They are also generally comfortable with the fact that 'medical' knowledge is constantly changing, and that many practices used widely in the past are no longer considered 'best-practice' or even acceptable today. Finally, veterinarians performed docking operations in the past because they are paid to do so and, therefore, had external justification for their actions. All of these factors mean that their self concept is unlikely to be threatened by new anti-docking information and that they are unlikely to challenge the scientific sources of anti-docking information. Because the new information is consonant with many pre-existing knowledge structures, it causes little, if any, cognitive dissonance.

The average veterinarian, then, probably experiences little psychological distress on being presented with information that tail docking may cause pain and suffering for the animals involved. Those who were previously uncomfortable with performing surgery for cosmetic reasons, but who felt that they had no real choice as it was part of their job, may actually feel relieved because they do now have a reasonable justification for not docking. Others may feel some discomfort about the fact that they have docked many puppies in the past, but many veterinarians easily resolve this dissonance by choosing not to dock in the future. Bringing current behaviour in line with accepted knowledge and advocated standards is acknowledged as being the most direct and effective way for a person to maintain their personal integrity in the face of new information that renders previous behaviours regrettable, particularly when public advocacy ensures that the imbalance between previous behaviours and current beliefs is made public.<sup>6</sup>

Potential difficulties arise primarily for those veterinarians who resist behavioural change and who must, therefore, find a way to reduce the dissonance caused by conflict between anti-docking knowledge structures and pro-docking behaviour. Like the cigarette-smoking doctor described above, this dissonance has the potential to be considerable, although it may be effectively ameliorated by the fact that veterinarians can cite several good reasons for continuing to dock. Some may argue that they have no choice but to dock puppies, primarily to prevent home docking operations that may be less adequately conducted, or perhaps to ensure the quality of life of a dog that may be discriminated against on the basis of being undocked, or even to retain valued customers who demand tail docking, thereby protecting the financial interests of their employees. Such veterinarians, engaging in a practice that is unpleasant in order to obtain a desired outcome, but doing so with reasonable external justification, are perhaps likely to exaggerate the desirability of the outcome relative to its alternatives, thus adding cognitions consonant with their behaviour. They may also choose to focus on the many positive benefits they bring to dogs (an indirect strategy for reducing dissonance) and may minimise the extent or duration of putative docking-associated pain (trivialisation). Any of these effort-justification alternatives will effectively reduce the dissonance caused between anti-docking attitudes and pro-docking behaviour, so that some individual veterinarians can continue to dock tails without experiencing extreme psychological discomfort, even while most veterinarians might choose to act otherwise.

On the other side of the equation are the breeders and canine organisations, whose attitudes appear to have altered little in recent years, despite their having access to the same information responsible for altering the attitudes and behaviours of veterinarians. It seems reasonably safe to assume that most dog breeders develop a strong emotional attachment to their dogs. While there are probably some who engage in dog breeding for commercial reasons or to satisfy other personal goals, breeding and caring for dogs is a challenging hobby, which consumes resources and time. Breeders, therefore, are generally people with a strong commitment to the canine community, to their particular breed, and to their individual dogs. Because of this, they typically spend time gaining information about their animals, act as public advocates for canine health and welfare issues, and are often considered to have expert knowledge about relevant topics such as diet, exercise, genetics, health and canine behaviour. This implies that breeders know the facts about tail docking and that they will have carefully weighed up all relevant information before engaging in the process. Indeed, whereas docking may barely rate a mention among the tough moral issues faced by other members of the community, anyone who breeds docked dogs will have at least thought about the issue and those who care most about their dogs are likely to have thought about it at some length. How then, can the pro-docking attitudes of these groups be explained?

Consider the experienced breeder who has been having their dogs docked for many years. This person probably initially thought about the docking process, but did so in the absence of any convincing scientific evidence to indicate that docking was a problematic issue. They also requested that their initial litter be docked in the absence of strong community concern about animal welfare, in the absence of any overt concern by veterinarians about the process, and in the presence of written standards and authoritative canine control councils stressing that



docking is appropriate in those breeds that were traditionally docked. They may never have observed the immediate reaction of pups to docking or may have misattributed any psychological discomfort felt during this procedure to some other variable. They may also have never heard of the word 'neuroma' and the chronic pain often associated with amputated limbs and may have watched many docked dogs live apparently 'normal' lives, perhaps excelling in sports such as agility or obedience. They may be genuinely concerned about canine welfare issues, and probably have many close friends who dock dogs and who are, nonetheless, caring, intelligent, well-informed members of the canine-loving community.

For people such as this, emerging scientific evidence against docking, and the changing attitudes expressed by veterinarians and welfare organisations, are clearly dissonant with many existing beliefs. Moreover, the situation fulfils many of the criteria that are known to increase the dissonance experienced when some attitudes and behaviours are mismatched with others. First, the new information is dissonant with many existing attitudes and behaviours, rather than with just a few. Second, the cognitions in question are central to the person's values and self-concept. Third, unlike the veterinarians, the individual breeder is personally responsible for choosing to engage in the pro-docking behaviour, which evidence would now suggest is hypocritical with respect to their stated values. Fourth, they may well have publicly advocated those values. Fifth, it is being claimed by respected veterinary experts that this behaviour may have foreseeable adverse consequences for those animals with which they identify so closely. Sixth, since few breeders claim that tail docking is pleasant, most are engaging in an unpleasant activity in order to obtain a desired outcome. Finally, the financial rewards for docking (and dog breeding in general) are minimal. This means that most breeders have chosen to dock willingly, without the comfort experienced by veterinarians who can use high levels of external motivation to justify their counter-attitudinal behaviour.

Given this state of affairs, it seems inevitable that extremely high levels of cognitive dissonance will be experienced by established breeders who care deeply about the welfare of their dogs but who are exposed to new anti-docking information. High levels of dissonance, in turn, lead to high levels of psychological discomfort and strong motivation to reduce this discomfort. Attempts to reduce the discomfort may take many forms. Some breeders might simply change their attitudes about tail docking and cease to dock their dogs. This may be particularly difficult, however, since it requires not only accepting the new scientific evidence against docking, but also accepting that one's previous decision to engage in docking practices was inappropriate, that the canine association and standards that one has supported in the past are at odds with at least some aspects of canine welfare, and that one may have inadvertently, but willingly and freely, subjected many of one's much-loved canine companions to chronic pain or discomfort. Because of this level of difficulty, those breeders who do cease to dock their dogs are likely to engage in 'spreading of alternatives', and may become particularly anti-docking in their approach. Cooper and Fazio<sup>3</sup> describe several examples of people in other contexts who cope with having engaged in behaviours that contravene core values by re-evaluating their behaviour or attitudes. Once these people accept responsibility for having previously engaged in an act that they later feel is undesirable or hypocritical, they often attempt to make amends by becoming overzealous in promoting alternative behaviours.

An easier course of action, from a psychological perspective, is for the breeder to retain their view of the self and the external world, choosing instead to reduce dissonance using other direct and indirect methods. Hence, they may directly reject the new information as inconclusive, taking advantage of the fact that it is impossible to 'prove' the existence of pain in members of another species. They may also discredit the source of the information, focus on and exaggerate evidence suggesting that tail docking may have some positive effects, argue that docking is necessary because of external forces, such as market demand or to satisfy breed standards and do well in the show ring, and downplay or trivialise the significance of tail docking relative to other health and welfare issues. Breeders may also reduce dissonance indirectly by engaging in other canine activities that bolster their self concept as a caring, loving, canine representative. The 'spreading of alternatives' effect potentially means that docking is perceived much more positively than it was when the decision to dock was initially made, that the pro-docking breeder becomes over-confident in evaluating their knowledge base, and that those who do choose not to dock are likely to be ostracised, discredited and maligned.

Consider, also, members of the public who are considering purchasing a dog. Few people have probably given tail docking any serious thought and those who purchased docked dogs in the past most probably assumed that the 'experts' knew what they were doing. Now the experts appear divided, with veterinarians and welfare organisations publicly providing anti-docking literature, but breeders and canine associations insisting that tail docking is appropriate and desirable. One might presume that new owners would initially approach the issue of tail docking with an open mind, objectively seeking out accurate information from a range of sources. Those with a scientific or welfare background are perhaps most likely to accept the advice of veterinarians and welfare organisations, and may put pressure on breeders to produce dogs with tails. Those sceptical of such sources, or with a strong desire to compete in canine sports where non-docked dogs might face discrimination, may be more inclined to reject the scientific information and accept the advice offered by breed organisations. Still others may avoid thinking about the issue by selecting a breed that is not customarily docked. Given the increased objectivity of new owners, however, and given that the weight of evidence appears firmly on the side of the anti-docking view, more and more new owners might be expected to insist on obtaining undocked dogs.

Finally, consider those who are new to breeding and who potentially face many conflicting knowledge units when deciding whether or not to dock their puppies for the first time. These people are exposed to polemic alternatives, which make objectivity difficult. Those with cross-bred dogs are perhaps most likely to consult a veterinarian for advice, with the result that fewer and fewer cross-bred dogs are likely to be docked. New breeders of pure-bred dogs, however, are typically already part of a culture that strongly promotes docking, and they are likely to be influenced by established breeders and breed clubs, who assume mentorship roles. Regardless of the decision made by the new breeder, they immediately become susceptible to the processes to reduce cognitive dissonance that are associated with the 'spreading of alternatives' effect. Those who choose to dock are likely to become more and more pro-docking, while those who elect not to dock may exaggerate the problems associated with tail docking and exaggerate the importance of tails for communication, balance and aesthetics.

## What can be done to change existing attitudes?

If it is assumed on the basis of our previous review<sup>1</sup> that widespread docking cannot be ethically justified, then it is important to consider how the attitudes of those who continue to dock can be altered. In Australia, the introduction of proposed national legislation banning tail docking would resolve many of the issues, although it cannot be expected to alter the pro-docking attitudes of established breeders, whose knowledge structures and self concepts are such that they firmly believe docking to be in the best interests of their dogs. Such individuals may cease breeding or change breeds, selectively breed naturally bob-tailed dogs, lobby the government to rescind the legislation, or find 'health-related' reasons to have their dogs docked. State-specific legislation is more problematic. It is likely to remove any justification for veterinarians who feel a responsibility to continue docking in spite of having anti-docking attitudes and it may induce compliance in those who believe docking is appropriate but who also believe themselves to be law abiding, responsible citizens. The motives of the government are likely to be challenged and discredited, however, and many dogs will simply cross the necessary borders in order to be docked, or may be docked illegally by individual breeders, since enforcement of the legislation will be difficult without accompanying attitude change.

The introduction of legislation in Australia does little to address the issue of attitude change, both in Australia and in other countries where docking is legally permitted. In order to create change in the absence of legislation, those who wish to halt the unnecessary docking of companion dogs may need to employ methods designed to promote attitude change. Indeed, one of the advantages of analysing the tail docking issue from the perspective of cognitive dissonance theory is that it provides several means by which even the most entrenched community attitudes and behaviours might be altered. Fewer people now drink and drive, many resist the temptation to sunbake or smoke, compliance with seatbelt laws is high and most responsible community citizens register and de-sex their companion animals. Might it also be possible to alter community attitudes towards tail docking?

The answer to this question is 'yes', although it should be acknowledged that breeders of docked dogs and pure-bred dog associations will remain highly resistant to change for the reasons described above. A more receptive audience is likely to be provided by the general public and by those who are new to breeding, especially those who possess little information about tail docking. These people are unlikely to have previously engaged in the procedure and should, therefore, be more able to objectively process the information from both sides of the debate. These people should experience less dissonance when provided with anti-docking information, particularly if it comes from reputable sources such as veterinarians, welfare associations and 'converted' dog breeders. The public do not directly make decisions concerning tail docking and most reputable breeders would deny breeding for profit rather than to 'improve the quality of the breed'. It remains true, however, that breeders must find homes for the dogs they produce. If the public demands undocked dogs, therefore, breeders may be forced to modify their behaviours, even if their attitudes initially remain in favour of docking. Since anti-docking behaviour and pro-docking attitudes will result in dissonance, those breeders who currently justify their decision to dock by arguing that it is a process demanded by new owners (the external motivation method of reducing dissonance) may eventually alter their attitudes accord-

ingly, especially if peers and professional bodies are likewise adopting more tolerant attitudes towards those who do not dock.

Changing the attitudes of those with strong pro-docking knowledge structures and behaviours will be difficult, but such changes are achievable. An excellent example of such a profound shift is provided by Bernard Rollin<sup>16</sup> in his discussion of American cowboy attitudes towards rodeo (see also the discussion of attitude change in Wood).<sup>8</sup> In the 1970s, rodeo became a target for animal welfare groups, who developed a petition calling for the 'sport' to be abolished, due to the pain and fear believed to be experienced by the animals involved. This engendered a siege-like mentality among cowboys involved in rodeo, resentful at being told what to do by urban politicians who, they felt, had no real knowledge of the sport. Over several years, Rollin worked with members of the Western cattle culture. Rather than accusing these people of being cruel or engaging in 'morally unacceptable' behaviours, Rollin began by drawing a clear distinction between the cowboys and modern agriculturalists who use technology to exploit animals and who care most about profit and productivity. The difference, Rollin argued, was that the cowboy has a relationship with animals based on old-fashioned husbandry and care. Ranchers are typically not cruel people who do not care about animals, but people whose livelihood has, for many decades, depended on their understanding and responding to animal needs. From their own ethical perspective, then, some aspects of rodeo were clearly problematic. Once this was accepted, the cowboys themselves facilitated the process of change in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance created.

The tactic used by Rollin was also employed by the president of the USA 1963-69, Lyndon Johnson. Johnson realised that ethics cannot be 'taught' by providing a list of rules and that, in trying to force any person to alter their belief structure, one only creates resistance. Instead, ethical disagreements are best resolved by using the person's own ethics to extract the desired conclusion, primarily by making individuals' relevant beliefs salient, and by encouraging them to realise that their actions are not consonant with these beliefs. Whereas Prohibition was forced on people and failed because it was actively resisted, Lyndon Johnson realised that most Americans already accepted two premises, the first being that 'All humans should be treated equally', and the second being that 'All 'Blacks' are human'. By elucidating these core beliefs, and then emphasising that they were dissonant with the way 'Blacks' were treated, he was able to convince people to change both their attitudes and behaviour in ways that could never have been attained through the use of force (discussed in Rollin).<sup>16</sup>

This same approach might prove effective in relation to tail docking. Attitude change will not be promoted by castigating breeders for engaging in the practice. Instead, breeders and breed societies should be encouraged to re-examine tail docking in light of their own belief structures and codes of practice. Few breeders would argue that the welfare of their dogs is unimportant. Few would engage in a practice that they believed caused significant pain (82% believe that puppies experience no or only mild pain during docking)<sup>17</sup> or had any adverse effects on the dogs they cherish. Few would agree that a written standard or market forces could compel them to cause any harm to their dogs. The point is that breeders and breed societies do not have these beliefs, because of the processes described previously for reduction of cognitive dissonance. Indeed, they cannot have these beliefs, because doing so would mean that they engage in

psychologically hypocritical behaviour each time a tail is docked, and the distress created would border on being unbearable.

Perhaps breeders who argue that docking is painless should be encouraged by veterinarians to hold their puppies while they undergo the procedure and to discuss how one might identify pain in a newborn pup. Those who feel that the pain experienced by puppies is justified by potential benefits should be encouraged to read literature relevant to the issue with an open mind, and to participate in research aiming to identify such benefits. Clubs and breeders should be encouraged to publicly advocate their views on animal welfare, so as to ensure these are salient when future decisions are made, and they should be encouraged to explore how breed standards and codes of ethics related to breeding practices might be reinterpreted in light of new evidence about the potential impact of tail docking. It has previously been argued that one of the best ways to decrease overconfidence is to decrease the threat inherent in admitting ignorance.<sup>15</sup> The goal, then, is to encourage breeders to admit that the evidence on both sides of the debate has remained inconclusive until recently, but that newer evidence provides strong grounds for re-evaluating existing attitudes and behaviours. Care must be taken to preserve the self concept of people who have a strong emotional attachment to their dogs and a strong commitment to the welfare of these same animals. By acknowledging that these people have always made decisions with the best interests of their animals in mind, and that animal welfare has always been of central concern to most dog breeders, the hypocrisy of tail docking in light of currently available information becomes immediately apparent. In this environment such knowledge is less threatening, and so the possibility of attitude and behaviour change is enhanced.

## Conclusion

Knowledge about canine nervous system development and the chronic effects of limb amputation in other species, including humans, provides a prima facie case against carrying out tail docking in dogs except in special, medically indicated, cases.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to believe that tail docking would even be considered by the community, by veterinarians, by welfare organisations or by dog breeders and owners, were it not already an established practice. Yet some of those who have engaged in and/or sanctioned docking for many years are likely, for psychological reasons, to remain vigorously opposed to any change in current practices. A seeming necessity for national legislation to curb tail docking is unfortunate, reflecting our history as a soci-

ety in which animals were conceptualised as objects, able to be manipulated and surgically altered, without anaesthetic, to suit relatively trivial human goals. A more acceptable solution is to promote attitude change among the public and especially among those who choose to dock dogs. This can best be achieved by first acknowledging that such people are not cruel or uncaring, but have always acted according to what they genuinely believe to be the best interests of their animals. In possession of evidence to the contrary, but with their self concept intact, such people are well placed to alter community attitudes towards docking, and to take a leadership role in altering the way in which our society perceives animals in general.

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# Tails we win! AVA posts significant victories on docking issue

**C**ongratulations to Bruce Cartmill and Sam MacMahon, Presidents of the NSW and NT Divisions respectively, for their activities in driving the ban on tail docking into those two States.

NT has confirmed the ban and NSW is expected to make an announcement. This means that all States will ban tail docking. Work is now underway to strengthen legislation by removing a loophole allowing some breeders to continue these outdated practices.

AVA is leading the consumer trend: there are now two advertisements on national TV showing undocked dogs – a Visla and an English Springer Spaniel.

It is when these undocked dogs are accepted as “normal” by advertisers that consumer sentiment really begins to turn. If you have any photos of “whole” dogs, put them up in the waiting room and draw attention to what your professional association has achieved.

## Doggie demographics dip

Dr Chris Baldock has presented research on dog ownership to the AVA Board and others that shows dog ownership has plateaued and may drop in the next few years. Similar research in the mid-1990s on cats was somewhat ambivalently received by the profession but has been confirmed by further surveys. Chris estimates that the reduction in cat ownership alone has resulted in up to 350 fewer veterinarians needed in Australia to service the cat population.

It is likely that Chris will tour parts of Australia to deliver the presentation personally to AVA Divisions and we will try to present it in other forums as well. Keep your eyes open for local meeting dates.

## The case of the single-issue member

In 2002-03, AVA undertook consumer research with members, ex-members and non-members to examine their

## viewpoint



AVA President Jo Sillince

attitudes to AVA. All the groups provided similar feedback – AVA is well respected, is the voice of the profession, and known and respected by governments.

The research highlighted the key benefits of membership – the Journal, the Branch network (which underlines the collegiate nature of AVA), the Conference, the lobbying activities on members' behalf, the focus on “higher things” such as codes of ethics, the Complaints and Ethics committees, and so on.

So what does it mean to be a non member? Non-members choose to render themselves powerless within the profession and with government. Non-members condone the procedures, policies and practices of AVA because a non-member has no chance to change it and little chance to be heard in public.

On the other hand, a member of AVA has a chance to be heard and to lobby from within. The power of the AVA democracy means that each member has the chance to be heard in at least four forums – the Journal, the Policy Council, the Special Interest Groups and the Divisions – as well as to communicate directly with Board members and the President. There is no such chance to influence colleagues from the outside.

## Animal welfare gone mad?

I was privileged to be invited to speak on poultry welfare issues at the Commonwealth Veterinary Conference recently. What an eye-opener. Part of the UK group spoke about the “welfare aspects of allowing cattle to be out in the rain” and “welfare aspects of friction rubbing of udders during walks to the dairy parlour”. The EU is talking about “completely offloading cattle from trucks and grazing overnight for any trip longer than 8 hours”. (Interestingly there was no comment about the stress of unloading, reloading and mixing social groups.) The UK farm welfare group has declared that “religious killing” should be banned unless stunning is carried out, which has caused a huge storm of protest in Europe – the same Europe that supports restrictions on transport.

The UK group then declared, “it was time that these sensible EU/UK requirements were incorporated into the global agenda”. The EU seeks to impose its version of animal welfare into the latest WTO trade negotiations, which would have ramifications for Australian trade.

Feeling slightly affronted? At present we can largely only examine animal welfare in the light of our own culture, religious beliefs and ideological norms. The traditional Christian/Anglo Saxon-based ideals of respect for sentient beings, but allowing use of most species for food and so on, may manifest rather differently in other cultures.

Are we at liberty to criticise animal practices in other countries when we are subject to criticism? Should we seek to develop an outcomes-based “worldwide welfare code” that tries to recognise different cultural norms and practices? As we sometimes feel free to criticise those cultures that do not conform to our ideals of animal welfare, it is becoming increasingly apparent that even with so-called “developed” countries there are emerging differences in concepts of animal welfare that mean this is a re-emerging issue of significance. Stay tuned.

Australian

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## Tail docking in dogs: a review of the issues

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Different groups in our community hold strong views about tail docking in domestic dogs. These range from veterinary associations and welfare organisations, which typically want the practice banned, to purebred dog associations, which vigorously oppose the introduction of antidocking legislation. An evaluation of the tail docking issue, which is informed and nonemotive, requires the integration of moral views with biological and behavioural facts. In recent years, much data have been accumulated concerning the welfare implications of tail docking. Unfortunately, however, there has been limited transfer of this knowledge to people interested in the issue. In this review some of the main arguments for and against canine tail docking are presented and evaluated.

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The subject of tail docking in domestic dogs has been reviewed previously<sup>1,2</sup> but remains controversial in many countries. It has traditionally been a widespread practice, with approximately one third of all recognised pure dog breeds historically being docked. Tail docking has been banned in several European countries, however, and is limited in others. In the UK, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons describes tail docking, unless medically indicated, as unacceptable. Paradoxically, docking is only permitted in the UK if it is performed by a veterinary surgeon.<sup>2</sup> Since this means that a refusal to dock by this profession might virtually eliminate the practice, the fact that the College has never taken action against any veterinarian for conducting the 'unacceptable' procedure is perhaps indicative of continued ambivalence about tail docking. Accordingly, docking is legal and very common in many other developed countries, such as the USA.

While docking is legal in most areas of Australia, some veterinarians refuse to perform the procedure.<sup>3</sup> Others report doing so only because they fear that inexperienced breeders will otherwise take matters into their own hands. The Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC), in their Code of Practice for the Tail Docking of Dogs, specifies that docking *'should only be carried out in respect of those breeds with a known history or propensity to injury and/or damage in their tails in the course of their normal activities for therapeutic and/or prophylactic purposes...'*<sup>4</sup> As with other organisations, however, the ANKC has, thus far, failed to act against breeders who dock breeds for which no scientific evidence of a propensity for tail damage exists. Clearly, then, the issue of tail docking remains controversial. It is undoubtedly complex, involving economic, aesthetic, welfare and moral considerations. In addition, there is a perceived lack of scientific evidence directly relevant to the issue, which means that decisions are made at least partially on the basis of inference and speculation. This paper reviews the main arguments for and against tail docking in dogs, in order to facilitate a more informed debate about the issue than is presently possible.

### What is tail docking?

Tail docking refers to the amputation of part or all of an animal's tail. It can be accomplished by application of a tight rubber ring around the tail. This serves to occlude blood vessels supplying those tissues distal to the ring, resulting in ischaemia, necrosis and, eventually, loss of the tail. This 'banding' method is commonly used in agricultural species, such as lambs and dairy cows, and, in one Australian survey, was reported to be used by 16% of dog breeders who perform their own docking procedures.<sup>3</sup> In dogs, however, tail docking is more commonly performed via a surgical procedure. According to the ANKC, docking may be conducted either by a veterinary surgeon, by an experienced breeder, or by some other person in the presence of, or with the assistance of, an experienced breeder. An experienced breeder is defined as anyone who has been involved with a docked breed for a period of at least 5 years and

who, within that time, has bred at least three litters of which he/she has personally (under instruction) docked the tails of these litters.<sup>4</sup> This implies that tail docking may often be conducted by breeders rather than by veterinarians, but we could find no information detailing the proportion of docking operations carried out by the different groups. Docking generally takes place between 3 and 5 days after birth. More often than not, the puppies are given no anaesthesia or analgesia but are simply restrained manually. The hair around the site of amputation may be clipped. Part or all of the tail is then removed using sharp scissors or a blade. One or more sutures may be applied if necessary. Docking is not without risk and anecdotal reports of puppies dying from shock or blood loss abound. No published studies could be found, however, which document rates of docking-related complications or deaths either in veterinary surgeries or in the community.

Surgical amputation is sometimes considered to result in less acute and chronic pain than banding, although this has been tested only in lambs and available results (discussed later) are equivocal.<sup>5-7</sup> Also, since lambs are born in a more developed state than are puppies, and are often docked at an older age, the applicability of these studies to dogs is not known. When docking very young puppies, anaesthesia has not been recommended until recently because the risk of convulsions, respiratory failure or cardiac difficulties was considered to be unacceptably high. Advances in veterinary medicine now mean that such risks are reduced, but only 10% of veterinarians in an Australian survey reported using anaesthesia when docking tails.<sup>3</sup> Anaesthetic agents are generally unavailable to breeders who dock their own puppies.

### Arguments against tail docking in domestic dogs.

Since it is not customary in our society to remove limbs or appendages from animals arbitrarily, it may be expected that tail docking served some important function in the past. Indeed, if tail docking was associated with established benefits in the past, it might be assumed that those currently calling for a ban on the procedure have a burden of proof to justify why a change to existing practices is necessary. It is argued later in this paper that there are no established benefits associated with tail docking in dogs and that, for several reasons, the burden of proof actually lies with those who support the procedure to demonstrate unequivocally that it causes no detriment to the animal. First, however, it is worthwhile considering the arguments most commonly used to justify calls for a ban on tail docking.

#### *Acute pain associated with tail docking*

Many people who oppose tail docking do so on the grounds that the docking process is likely to cause acute pain. In contrast, those who support tail docking typically argue that little, if any, pain is likely to be experienced due to the immature nervous system found in very young canines. Interestingly, a survey conducted in Australia in 1996 found that 76% of veterinarians surveyed believed that tail docking causes significant to severe pain, with none believing that no pain is experienced. In contrast, 82% of dog breeders believed that docked puppies experience no, or only mild, pain, with only 18% believing that docking causes significant pain.<sup>3</sup> This difference of opinion is interesting and is discussed further elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> More pertinent in the present context is the issue of whether science is able to resolve the question of whether very young puppies are capable of experiencing pain. A second issue

concerns whether or not the magnitude of this pain, if it exists, can be assessed.

*Can puppies feel pain?* — Pain is an inherently subjective phenomenon that cannot be identified or quantified using available technologies. It must, therefore, be inferred on the basis of indirect measures. This is not an issue unique to the tail docking problem but one that has plagued scientists and philosophers for many years. We simply do not know when another organism, including another human, is feeling pain, but must infer this on the basis of their behaviour, their physiological responses, or their ability to verbally tell us that something 'hurts'. Pain in humans, for example, may be measured by asking the person 'Do you feel pain?' 'Where?' 'How bad is the pain on a scale of 1-10?'. The effectiveness of such measures depends, of course, on the truthfulness of the person in question. For example, a child claiming to be in severe pain is more likely to be believed if they are lying prone in a hospital bed following major surgery, than if they have just been told by the physical education teacher that a 3 km hike is to be undertaken. Even verbal measures of pain, then, considered to be among the most persuasive of all measures, are of limited veracity. A congruence between reporting pain and actually feeling pain can never be absolutely guaranteed.<sup>9</sup>

The problem of inferring pain is even greater in nonverbal populations.<sup>10,11</sup> In fact, in order to reduce our present reliance on verbal responses so that nonverbal organisms are adequately included, there have been calls for a change in the definition of pain.<sup>9</sup> Behavioural indices of pain, such as a reluctance to come in contact with a potentially painful stimulus and distress vocalisations, are often employed, as are physiological indicators, such as a raised concentration of plasma cortisol or corticosterone, depending on the species, and increased heart rate. Webster,<sup>12</sup> in his discussion of animal welfare science, argues that in order to adequately understand the nature of pain in animals it is necessary to consider three areas of research, physiology, behaviour and neurobiology, and that none of these are sufficient in isolation. As an example, Webster<sup>12</sup> discusses the fact that ruminant species, such as sheep and cattle, that are known to have thresholds to pain similar to those demonstrated by humans,<sup>13,14</sup> can sustain foot and leg injuries, that would reduce a human to immobility, without displaying abnormal behaviour. Evidence showing that species differ in pain reactivity and pain thresholds means that all of our current indices of pain are of limited value when applied to nonverbal humans and animals. We simply can never know for certain whether or not these organisms feel pain as we do and as we alone are able to subjectively report. Despite this difficulty, as a society we typically make the anthropomorphic assumption that animals and infants do feel pain when they show behavioural and/or physiological changes that human adults exhibit when undergoing a 'painful' experience.

Unfortunately, the problems associated with inferring pain are magnified again when considering very young infants and young animals, which may be physically incapable of displaying behaviours thought to be indicative of pain.<sup>15</sup> It may also be impossible in these organisms to extract blood or saliva samples in sufficient quantities to permit the measurement of stress-related hormones, and the very act of collecting the samples may be sufficiently stressful or painful to confound any results obtained. Generally, in the absence of more acceptable evidence, we make the assumption that these organisms feel pain when put in situations that would cause pain to ourselves. This is an



assumption that we feel justified in making on the basis of erring on the side of caution and, indeed, some would argue, one that is ethically mandated in our care of animals, young infants and disabled adults.

Perhaps it is due to the difficulty of unequivocally demonstrating the presence of pain in very young organisms that very few attempts have been made to assess whether pain is experienced when young puppies undergo tail docking. Studies using other species, available in larger numbers, may be instructive. Several research groups have reported that docking causes acute pain and distress in lambs,<sup>5,6</sup> piglets,<sup>16</sup> and calves.<sup>17</sup> In all studies the animals demonstrated behavioural and/or physiological changes in response to docking that were interpreted as being consistent with the presence of acute pain.

These results strengthen claims that the docking of dogs' tails is likely to cause acute pain, but this conclusion can still be challenged for two reasons. The first arises because most available studies used banding to dock the tails rather than surgical amputation. It could be argued, therefore, that the acute pain responses observed in agricultural animals were caused by the pressure of the bands on nociceptors in the skin at the site of application, and that a lesser response might be expected following the much more rapid surgery typically used to dock dogs. Little scientific evidence directly addresses this issue although, in two studies that compared three docking methods in lambs at 5, 21 and 42 days, banding did appear to cause more pain and distress, as measured using behavioural indicators<sup>6</sup> and plasma cortisol levels,<sup>7</sup> than surgical docking. A significant degree of pain resulted from surgical docking, however, and it appeared greater than that caused by banding in conjunction with application of a clamp, which destroyed innervation to tissue distal to the site of application. In addition, whereas all three methods of docking were reported to cause considerable pain for up to 3 hours following treatment, plasma cortisol concentrations returned to baseline levels more rapidly in the two banded groups than in the surgical group, in which they remained elevated for over 3 hours.<sup>7</sup> Interpretation of these results is made difficult by the poorly specified relationship between the various pain indicators used and actual pain, as was discussed above. This issue is also discussed further in two papers by Lester et al who argue that, since behavioural responses vary depending on the docking methodology employed, plasma cortisol concentrations may provide a more accurate measure of docking-associated distress.<sup>5,18</sup> On this basis, the results provided both by Lester et al<sup>5,18</sup> and by Kent and Molony<sup>7</sup> suggest that surgical docking may result in more acute pain and more prolonged distress than does banding, at least in lambs. Regardless of which method of docking causes relatively more pain or distress than other methods, if it is accepted that the degree of avoidance behaviour or the extent of change in physiological indices is an indication of relative severity of pain, then there are clearly reasonable grounds for arguing that surgical docking causes some amount of acute pain in the species studied, as does banding, and that either method is also likely to cause pain in other physiologically similar species, such as the dog.

A second issue that prevents easy generalisations from studies using agricultural animals to dogs relates to the fact that dogs are typically docked between 3 and 5 days of age, whereas lambs and cattle are sometimes docked much later. At a later age it might be expected that, since sensory and perceptive processes are more developed, any pain associated with docking may be

intensified. There have been several studies that have examined pain responses in animals docked at a fairly young age. In lambs less than one week old, tail docking using a banding technique caused distress for approximately thirty minutes, as indicated by both behavioural measures and plasma cortisol levels.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, two breeds of lamb appeared to show an age-dependent but different increase in the plasma cortisol response to docking although, in both breeds, pain responses to tail docking peaked in the period between 4 hours and a few days following birth.<sup>20</sup> Contrary to expectations, it was also noted that the surgical method appeared more painful in 5-day-old lambs, according to some behavioural measures, than in older groups.<sup>6</sup> A similar age effect, with younger animals exhibiting more behavioural signs of pain than older animals, has also been reported following docking in cattle.<sup>21</sup>

It seems, then, that immaturity may not protect some animals against feeling acute pain during and immediately following the docking process. The relevance of this information to the current issue may still be questioned, however, on the grounds that dogs, like most carnivores, are born in a much less developed state than are most herbivores. Whereas a 3- to 5-day-old lamb exhibits a well developed nervous system and complex behavioural repertoire, young pups of the same age have few fully functional sensory organs and exhibit very few behaviours. Newborn pups are unable to perceive or respond to visual or auditory information. Might not they also be unable to feel pain?

This question is difficult to answer conclusively, although it has been established in other mammalian species that immaturity does not equal insensibility to pain. Newborn rat pups, for example, actively respond to painful stimuli immediately after birth, well before the modalities of vision and hearing are completely functional (reviewed in Anand and Craig<sup>9</sup>). Additional information comes from human studies. It is instructive that, before 1987, it was widely believed that neonatal humans lacked the neurophysiological equipment necessary to experience pain. This belief was used to justify the then common practice of performing invasive surgical procedures on infants without administration of analgesia, but was challenged in a series of studies in the late 1980s.<sup>22</sup> These established that the neonatal nociceptive system, and even that possessed by preterm infants on the very borderline of survival, has the anatomical and physiological equipment necessary for pain perception.

Newborn human infants, and even those born prematurely, also show behavioural and biochemical reactions consistent with the perception of pain in response to medical procedures that cause tissue damage.<sup>23-26</sup> In one recent study, human infants, born between the ages of 28 and 32 weeks gestational age, learned to anticipate the simple heel-stick procedure used to collect blood samples. These infants showed changed facial expressions, cardiac reactions and movement durations when their heel was raised before the procedure, indicating that they were anticipating its occurrence, believed to be only mildly painful.<sup>24</sup> Administration of analgesia to infants improves clinical outcomes following medical procedures expected to be painful, providing additional circumstantial evidence that the pain experienced by neonatal human infants is similar to that experienced by adults. Some authors have even argued that the immaturity of sensory processing within the newborn spinal cord of human infants leads to lower thresholds for excitation and sensitisation, therefore potentially maximising the central

effects of tissue-damaging inputs.<sup>27</sup> A similar relationship might be expected to pertain to adult and neonatal canines, unless dogs differ in this respect from other mammalian species.

Arguing against such a remote possibility, the limited behavioural evidence available supports the conclusion that docking is a painful procedure in canine pups. In a single available study,<sup>28</sup> in which the responses of 50 pups to docking were recorded, it was found that all puppies struggled and vocalised intensely and repeatedly at the time of amputation, recording an average of 24 'shrieks' and 18 'whimpers' during and immediately after docking. They also vocalised intensely as a suture was applied. Studies examining animal pain responses typically use vocalisation as an indicator of pain and stress.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the authors of this study reasonably concluded that the pups did feel significant pain at the time of docking.

It seems, then, that whereas the existence of pain in young dogs cannot be directly observed or measured at the present time, all available evidence reviewed thus far is consistent with the claim that docking causes acute pain to those dogs undergoing the procedure. In contrast, no evidence could be found to support the counter claim that newborn pups do not experience any pain at the time of docking.

*How much pain do puppies feel?* — A related issue, and perhaps an even more difficult one to resolve, concerns the magnitude of pain felt by pups during docking. It seems quite reasonable to accept that docking causes some pain, but to argue nonetheless that the pain is minimal and completely justified by the benefits that accrue. We do, after all, allow our children and pets to be vaccinated and we permit potentially painful medical procedures, such as circumcision, to be conducted on members of our community, such as the young, the aged and the intellectually disabled, who are unable to describe their experiences of pain or consent to medical procedures. Of course, such procedures are conducted only after careful consideration of the amount of pain likely to be inflicted and the potential benefits. The benefits reported to be associated with tail docking are evaluated later in this paper. In the following paragraphs, information relevant to determining the magnitude of pain experienced during docking is considered.

In their discussion of tail docking in dogs, Noonan et al<sup>28</sup> noted that breeders often use the fact that pups either suckle or fall asleep immediately following docking to support their view that the pups do not experience significant pain. However, while such behaviour may indicate that the pain felt during docking is minimal, there is no empirical evidence to support an association between lack of pain and these behaviours. On the contrary, other studies, in which young animals or humans show increased feeding or what is known as a 'sleeping fit' following a painful or stressful experience, have concluded that this may be either a displacement activity or an adaptive mechanism which ensures that the baby animal has sufficient nourishment and rest to survive under adverse circumstances.<sup>11,19,21</sup> In addition, as discussed in Noonan et al,<sup>28</sup> suckling behaviour may provide analgesia by stimulating the release of endogenous opioids, with oral administration of carbohydrate-laden solutions being commonly used to reduce pain responses in human infants.<sup>29</sup> It is possible, therefore, that pups suckle following docking to reduce docking-associated pain, rather than because the pain they feel is minimal. This issue could be investigated empirically by subjecting puppies to various experiences believed likely to cause pain and noting their responses, particularly whether their sleeping or suckling responses increase or

decrease with the magnitude of pain believed to be inflicted, but it would be ethically difficult to justify such a study.

A similar refutation can be levelled against the common argument that pups are unlikely to feel significant pain during docking due to a reported lack of myelination in the nerve cells responsible for pain conduction. This argument is not persuasive, since myelination is not necessary to enable nerve cell conduction, but merely speeds it up.<sup>11,30</sup> Puppies may experience docking related pain more slowly than older dogs, but an estimated 0.25 second delay<sup>2</sup> in pain perception says little about the magnitude of pain experienced. Indeed, some authors claim that puppies may be more sensitive to pain than adult dogs, because inhibitory nerve pathways are also poorly developed.<sup>1,2</sup> In human infants it is commonly argued that pain perception may be magnified by the immature state of the spinal cord<sup>27,31,32</sup> and, in rat pups, there is evidence that very immature organisms may experience pain more intensely than do more mature infants (cited in McVey<sup>31</sup>). In 'tailed' animals, like canines, the spinal cord extends further down the vertebral column in infants than it does in adults, perhaps leading to a higher risk of docking-related infection and, potentially, a greater magnitude of pain.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to imagine how the issue of accurately assessing the magnitude of pain associated with docking may be resolved. Indeed, the issue is a philosophical one rather than a technological one, in that pain is inherently subjective. As there can be no conclusive evidence of pain felt by others it may be instructive that, in similar cases, where the magnitude of pain experienced by members of our own community cannot be measured, we tend to feel most comfortable in assuming the worst. The tail docking procedure varies quite substantially from minor procedures such as vaccinations, in that it involves complete amputation of a limb. Very few people would feel comfortable amputating a limb from a human infant or an elderly family member in the end stages of dementia without anaesthesia, so perhaps there is cause to give puppies the same consideration. While the evidence that pups feel substantial pain during tail docking is not scientifically conclusive, it is compelling. Pups do exhibit those pain responses of which they are capable, and there is every reason to expect that they experience considerable pain while being docked.

Of course, this in itself does not argue against tail docking per se, but merely suggests that our present methodology should be improved. The implicit conclusion that puppies should not be docked without adequate anaesthesia and analgesia need not imply that they should not be docked at all although, as described above, any decision to impose a surgical procedure on an organism unable to provide informed consent requires careful analysis of the costs and potential benefits to that organism. Certainly, given that very few people do appear to administer anaesthesia or analgesia during docking, the potential painfulness of the procedure is a significant cost that needs to be considered.

#### *Chronic health problems associated with tail docking*

Many of those who argue against tail docking would continue to do so even were adequate anaesthesia and analgesia to be provided at the time of docking. Some would do this on the basis of claims that a number of chronic health problems are associated with tail docking. Problems reviewed previously<sup>1</sup> include atrophy and degeneration of tail and pelvic muscles, leading to an increased risk of faecal incontinence, and compro-



mised pelvic diaphragm integrity, leading to an increased incidence of perineal hernia. It has also been claimed that acquired urinary incontinence is over-represented in specific docked breeds,<sup>33</sup> with one large study finding a significant statistical association between tail docking and acquired urinary incompetence that was independent of other factors such as the size of the dog.<sup>34</sup>

While these studies provide some cause for concern, evidence supporting claims of increased health problems in docked dogs is typically weak. A significant issue concerns a lack of adequately controlled studies comparing docked dogs with undocked dogs of the same breed. Without such studies, it is possible to argue that some breeds are simply more susceptible to these health problems and that any association with docking is spurious, existing only because these breeds happen to be among those that are docked. Indeed, it is conceivable that some breeds were docked initially in an effort to minimise health problems associated with genetic weaknesses, although we were unable to find any evidence in support of this claim. Individual breeders who dock their puppies clearly do not believe that the risks outweigh the benefits of docking and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, appear justified in maintaining this view for the present time.

This conclusion is not without some risk, however, as, in the absence of large scale, properly controlled studies, it is possible that a significantly increased health risk, affecting a substantial number of dogs overall, may not be evident to an individual owner or breeder, or even to a breed club. Those who argue against tail docking are equally justified, therefore, in maintaining the view that the procedure potentially causes harm to some dogs. Unless tail docking is justified on some defensible ground, the burden of proof falls on those who would dock to prove that the procedure does not lead to chronic health problems in even a small percentage of dogs. Studies investigating whether chronic health problems occur in the docked members of a breed but not in the undocked members of the same breed, or vice versa, are clearly required to resolve this issue.

#### *Chronic pain associated with tail docking*

The issue of whether chronic pain may occur in relation to tail docking is an important one. In humans, chronic pain following the amputation of limbs can take two forms. The first, in which pain is referred to the missing limb, is sufficiently common to warrant its own name, phantom limb pain (PLP). According to one comprehensive review,<sup>35</sup> PLP occurs in 50 to 75% of human amputees in the first week following amputation. In some people the pain resolves quite rapidly, but studies suggest that up to 60% of amputees experience referred pain for at least 2 years. Over 20% report daily pain attacks at 2 years post-amputation. Persistent severe pain continues indefinitely in 5 to 10% of human amputees. In addition to PLP, many amputees experience considerable pain in the remaining limb stump. Post-operative pain, lasting up to 3 weeks, occurs in 50% of amputees. Two years after amputation, stump pain affects 21% of amputees.<sup>35</sup> Some amputees describe the pain as a stabbing sensation or electric current that is strictly localised to the stump. Others report 'nerve storms' during which sharp shooting pains last for up to 2 days. Pain may be spontaneous or triggered by stimulating the stump; even a light touch can result in an unpleasant burning sensation.

The aetiology of PLP and stump pain remains controversial although there is an association between the condition of the

limb prior to amputation and the subsequent occurrence of PLP. Chronic pain is more common in those with severe pre-amputation pain. Neurological lesions can also moderate pain experiences, as can psychological factors and the type of limb injury sustained. None of these relationships is particularly strong, however, and chronic PLP is experienced by 'normal' persons who lose a perfectly healthy limb, either through accident or misadventure.<sup>35</sup> Stump pain is also most common in amputees with clear stump pathology, such as skin or circulatory disorders. Importantly, however, stump pain also occurs in people where the wound appears completely healed. According to Jensen and Rasmussen,<sup>35</sup> careful examination of stump sensibility reveals areas of hypalgesia, hyperalgesia, hyperpathia or allodynia in almost all amputees.

It is difficult to generalise from adult human amputees to neonatal pups, since amputation of an adult limb causes a sudden cessation of afferent input to the spinal cord from the severed nerves, while afferent input from the tail of a 3-day-old pup is likely to be poorly developed. In addition, the tails of most pups are assumed to be functioning normally prior to docking, with no pre-amputation pain and no limb pathology. There are reports that phantom limb experiences occur in up to 20% of people in which limbs are congenitally absent, or when amputation occurs before the age of 6 years.<sup>36</sup> Other studies, reviewed in Melzack et al,<sup>31</sup> have contradicted these findings, however, leaving the issue open to conjecture. The fact that ongoing pain occurs in even a small number of persons who experience limb amputation very early in life, or who are born with congenitally absent limbs, seems sufficient to raise concerns about tail docking in dogs, especially in cases where the potential benefits of docking are unclear or ethically indefensible. Since psychological factors are implicated in some cases of PLP and stump pain in humans, however, and it is not clear whether animals possess the cognitive apparatus required to feel psychological distress upon the absence of a limb, it is relevant to consider whether there are physiological mechanisms likely to lead to chronic pain following limb amputation in non-human species.

Peripheral nerve sections in all mammalian species produce many anatomical, physiological and biochemical changes. These include spontaneous nerve tissue activity, increased sensitivity to mechanical stimuli and specific neurochemicals, and the formation of nerve sprouts and neuromas. The presence of neuromas may be particularly relevant in the present context, as these are frequently observed to occur following amputation in animals. Neuromas are bundles of nerve fibres that develop almost inevitably when axons are severed in mammals and birds. They consist of swollen, tangled masses of nerves, present either as one large mass or as smaller, scattered masses.<sup>37</sup> In most cases, neuromas resolve over several weeks as the excess axon sprouts degenerate and the mass regresses. They can persist indefinitely, however, causing spontaneous nerve activity which may be perceived as chronic pain. Neuromas have been documented in lamb tail stumps up to 6 months after docking,<sup>38</sup> in pig tail stumps following docking,<sup>39</sup> and in the beaks of chickens that have had their beaks trimmed.<sup>40</sup> In chickens, neuromas formed after partial beak amputation continue to develop for at least 70 days and can persist for up to 70 weeks.<sup>37,40</sup>

We were unable to find any scientifically controlled studies demonstrating the presence, or absence, of neuromas in dogs following tail docking. This lack of evidence may simply be due

to the fact that dogs, unlike farm animal species, are not regularly killed in large numbers soon after docking takes place, so the appropriate assay cannot be conducted. It is possible that dogs, due to the very young age at which they are docked, develop less persistent neuromas than species treated later in life but there is no evidence to support this claim. Indeed, in one study in which three canines with docked tails were euthanased for behavioural problems, all of the dogs were found to have neuromas even though the docking process had occurred many years previously.<sup>41</sup> Due to the biased nature of this very small sample, it would not be appropriate to generalise the findings. In addition, those who support docking are typically able to argue that they have lived with docked dogs over many years without observing signs of pain associated with the tail stump. Such anecdotal observations do not 'prove' that docked dogs do not develop neuromas or feel persistent pain, because dogs are adept at hiding injuries and disguising pain. Certainly, many people in our community experience constant pain due to arthritis or other debilitating diseases without revealing this pain to those around them. An alternative explanation is that subtle signs of pain or discomfort are simply not noticed by many dog owners, or that they are misattributed to other factors, such as a bad temperament. While researching this paper the authors obtained several anecdotal reports of docked dogs with extremely sensitive tail stumps and other odd, stump-associated, behaviours. Most owners of docked dogs report seeing no such behaviours, however, and, in the absence of convincing evidence one way or the other, the issue remains undecided.

The potential development of neuroma-associated pain following docking, even if not established beyond doubt in dogs, seems sufficient to raise welfare concerns about tail docking. One might hope that neuromas develop in only a small proportion of docked dogs and that most of them resolve over a period of weeks or months. Even in this best case scenario, however, one must question the value of subjecting any dog to prolonged or constant pain unless there are clearly defensible benefits associated with tail docking. Perhaps more importantly, docking is typically carried out just before the critical formative period of a dog's life, in which most of its enduring social skills and behaviours are established. Since the impact of chronic pain on our own ability to function adequately in society is unquestioned, the justification for subjecting any dog to this experience needs careful consideration.

Before completing this section, it is worthwhile briefly considering evidence emerging from human infant studies, which suggest that pain experienced early in life may increase later sensitivity to pain and have behavioural ramifications (reviewed in Whitfield and Grunau<sup>32</sup>). Male infants circumcised soon after birth with no analgesia display increased distress when given vaccinations at 4 or 6 months of age, when compared to infants either not circumcised or circumcised following application of an analgesic cream.<sup>42,43</sup> Preterm infants who require treatment in an intensive care unit, later (at 4 to 5 years of age) similarly display higher somatization scores (physical complaints such as headache or stomach ache in the absence of a clear organic cause) than age-matched controls.<sup>44</sup> According to one review, prolonged pain in the newborn period in preterm infants may produce a relatively permanent shift in basal autonomic arousal, which may have long term sequelae including effects on attention and learning and the development of behaviour problems.<sup>32</sup> It is argued that the plasticity of peripheral and central sensory connections in the neonatal

period means that early damage can lead to prolonged structural and functional alterations in pain pathways that can last into adult life.<sup>27</sup> While these effects have not been demonstrated to occur in species other than humans, the benefits of tail docking would need to be reasonably compelling to justify exposing any animal to the potential risk of a prolonged sensitivity to painful stimuli.

#### *Impaired locomotion associated with tail docking*

Some authors who argue against docking claim that the tail is important for balance and agility and, therefore, that docked dogs may be handicapped relative to their tailed conspecifics.<sup>1</sup> This argument seems intuitively plausible but is not supported by empirical evidence. Given that most animal species, particularly those with lifestyles requiring speed and agility, possess tails, one might assume that these limbs confer some kind of evolutionary advantage. Unfortunately, however, no scientific studies have been published comparing the locomotion of docked dogs with those that are undocked. In the absence of such evidence, the 'impaired locomotion' argument against tail docking is unconvincing, particularly when one considers the success of docked dogs in agility competitions and in such demanding activities as hunting, retrieving and herding. It is possible that dogs are just so good at these activities that minor performance deficits due to docked tails are not easily detected. Studies examining the development of agility, balance and general locomotion in docked and undocked pups of the same breed would be required to clarify this issue. A comparative gait analysis of docked and undocked members of the same breed would also be invaluable.

#### *Impaired communication associated with tail docking*

Another argument against tail docking is that docked dogs may be socially disadvantaged relative to other dogs, in that they lack one of the main appendages used in canine communication.<sup>2</sup> Again, there is little evidence to support this claim. It is well established that dog tails are used for communication<sup>45</sup> and it is possible that docked dogs, particularly those that are docked close to the base of the tail, might be socially disadvantaged. Indeed, it is often stated that docked dogs engage in a number of compensatory behaviours, such as butt-wiggling (in which the entire back end of the dog wiggles furiously from side to side), in order to communicate. Whether docking may lead to an increase in social misunderstandings, particularly aggression, either from or towards the docked dog, however, has not been rigorously investigated. It would be informative to investigate this issue in adult dogs that receive tail amputation for medical reasons, but no such studies could be located.

A related difficulty concerns the docked dog's ability to communicate with members of the human species, who are typically taught in pet education programs to read dog body language primarily by observing the tail. It is possible that our children are endangered by docked dogs, simply because their ability to communicate with the dog is impaired, although this has not been demonstrated. Studies examining the ability of children to understand dog posture in docked and undocked breeds would be useful in this respect, as would studies comparing the number of bites each year inflicted by docked and undocked dogs, relative to their prevalence in the community.

#### *Summary of arguments against tail docking*

From the preceding discussion it can be seen that there are several reasons why the practice of tail docking might be opposed, especially when carried out in its present form. There

seems little doubt that docking causes acute pain in all species studied and, although the magnitude of pain cannot be ascertained, there is no reason to believe that amputation of a limb in a young puppy should be any less painful than amputation of a limb in any other animal, whether infant or adult. The fact that puppies appear to recover quickly from the docking process may indicate that the pain is minimal, but this cannot be tested and the relationship between apparently 'normal' behaviours, such as sleeping and suckling, and pain relief is unknown. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, therefore, docking should perhaps always be carried out after administration of an appropriate anaesthetic and using the best possible technique. Analgesia following docking is also clearly indicated.

Whether docking should be completely banned for the reasons listed above is less certain. Evidence suggesting that docking may be associated with several physical difficulties, locomotor deficits and/or impaired communication skills may be accumulating but, with well controlled studies lacking, it is yet to be convincing. Perhaps the strongest argument against docking is the fact that it may be associated with the presence of neuromas and chronic pain, or increased pain sensitivity, in at least some dogs. This has also not been demonstrated empirically, however, and it is perhaps unlikely that many docked dogs experience significant chronic pain as, even though dogs may mask pain extremely well, it might be expected to affect their behaviour in a systematic way, evident to those who know the species well. At most, then, it might be claimed that there is a weak *prima facie* case against tail docking on the basis that it may have detrimental effects, even though these have not yet been conclusively demonstrated. Whether this justifies a total ban on the process then depends on whether significant benefits are derived from tail docking, and whether these outweigh the potential for pain and suffering inherent in the procedure.

### Arguments in support of tail docking in domestic dogs.

Given *prima facie* evidence that even a minimal amount of 'harm' is likely to be associated with docking, the burden of proof falls on those who support docking to show that definite benefits outweigh the possible costs. In agricultural species such as lambs, pigs and dairy cows, docking is considered by some to be necessary because it serves some utilitarian function, preventing injury or disease in the docked animals, their conspecifics, or their human handlers.<sup>46</sup> Whether docking achieves these aims, and whether they justify the removal of an animal's tail, are issues for debate elsewhere. The task in this paper is limited to establishing whether there are valid reasons for docking dogs. The main arguments raised by pro-docking lobby groups are considered below.

#### *Maintaining tradition*

Tail docking in many dog breeds is an established custom believed to have been introduced some 2000 years ago in order to satisfy various motives. These include primarily functional reasons, such as to prevent damage to vulnerable tail tips in breeds used for hunting and retrieving in dense undergrowth, for ease of manipulation of terriers working in burrows and other confined spaces, and to prevent diseases such as rabies. They also include economic reasons, with some working dogs being docked to prevent the imposition of 'luxury dog' taxes in some circumstances. Some breeds also appear to have been docked initially for primarily aesthetic reasons, while others, representing breeds where some members are born with natu-

rally bobbed tails, were presumably originally docked to preserve breed uniformity.<sup>2</sup>

Some might argue that traditionally docked breeds should remain docked simply to preserve these traditions and to retain the distinctive appearance of the relevant breeds. Indeed, many people who dock claim that they do so mainly in order to comply with the official standard for the breed concerned. This argument from tradition, while popular, seems ethically unconvincing as a justification for tail docking. While it is true that some breeds have traditionally been docked within the limited history of the specific breed, the development of purebred dogs is itself a relatively recent phenomenon. Doubtless, the ancestors of some breeds can be traced back to antiquity, and there are claims that docking was introduced as early as 65 AD.<sup>47</sup> There is little indication that dogs, as they evolved from their wolfish forefathers, emerged sporting a 'traditionally' docked appearance, however, and there is no convincing evidence to suggest that docking was a common procedure in primitive societies, from whose canine companions modern day dogs were developed. Humans living in developed countries cannot use surgical techniques to create a distinctive looking animal and then argue that such a look is natural or even traditional. Dogs were 'traditionally' undocked long before they were 'traditionally' docked and any argument for tail docking purely in terms of retaining tradition is flawed in that it exists only by reference to our own limited cultural history.

The 'traditional' grounds for tail docking should also be evaluated within the context of our current social climate. A persuasive argument against docking tails merely to preserve tradition concerns the fact that when the 'traditionally' docked breeds were being developed, animals were defined by most people purely as human possessions. They enjoyed no legal or moral protection and humans were free to do with them as they liked. The prevalent view, based on the thesis of the French philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650), was that animals were simply mechanical automatons, unable to feel pain or emotions.<sup>48</sup> Vivisection without any form of anaesthesia was widely practiced by scientists and mistreatment of animals was a legal issue only if it impacted on the physical or financial well-being of their owners.

The Cartesian philosophical position regarding the status of animals is no longer widely accepted, at least not overtly. Physiological, biochemical, behavioural and psychological similarities between humans and other mammals are now well documented and animals are widely perceived as feeling, and in some cases possibly even thinking, biological organisms, to which humans, as moral agents, owe a substantial duty of care.<sup>49,50</sup> This is reflected in our support of animal welfare organisations and is codified in relevant laws. Given this significant change from the views held by our forebears, recourse to a defence of tail docking purely on the grounds of tradition appears untenable.

It is equally unacceptable in our contemporary context to dock tails simply to comply with a written standard of the kind used by purebred canine bodies in order to define the characteristics of each particular breed. Many breed standards were originally drafted at a time in which there was little knowledge of comparative physiology and in which animal welfare was of little concern. Breed standards, like all written laws and community guidelines, can and do change as cultures evolve and knowledge accumulates, with amendments to breed standards being published on a regular basis. One might be justified in preserving human traditions involving inanimate objects



such as steam trains and clothing styles, and one might like to adhere to written specifications when reproducing historical artefacts. When our traditions and our written codes concern practices involving species capable of pain and suffering, in contrast, they cannot be condoned on this basis alone.

The argument from 'tradition', then, is critically flawed. It reflects both a human arrogance towards history and tradition and a disregard for the changing status of animals within our community. If tail docking in dogs is to be continued then the defenders of the practice have a burden of proof to show that it is justified in terms of some kind of overall gain for either the individual animal or the community, as is claimed to be the case for other docked species, and/or that amputating a dog's tail simply has no significant welfare implications. Having already established that tail docking may indeed have significant welfare implications, the following sections consider whether the procedure may nonetheless be justified by some kind of gain for the individual organism.

#### *Prevention of tail damage*

Proponents of tail docking often cite many practical benefits believed to be associated with the procedure, although these purported benefits appear rarely, if ever, to have been demonstrated scientifically.<sup>1,2</sup> One of the most common claims is that some breeds that are traditionally docked tend to engage in activities as adults during which tail damage is likely to be frequent. Docking is argued to be necessary, therefore, to prevent the pain and discomfort associated with adult tail damage. This rationale for tail docking clearly does not condone the widespread practice that exists today, which includes many dog breeds that were traditionally docked for reasons other than preventing injury. Moreover, if docking is to be justified for the purpose of preventing adult tail damage in any breed, two assumptions require empirical support. First, evidence is required to support the claim that these traditionally docked dogs are particularly likely to sustain tail damage if left undocked, and that they are likely to do so in sufficient numbers to justify docking all members of the particular breed. Second, it is necessary to establish that tail damage in adult dogs is likely to cause substantially more suffering than does the docking process.

Unfortunately, persuasive evidence with which to either support or refute such claims is lacking. Since tail docking has been banned in Sweden, there has reportedly been a significant increase in the number of dogs from some breeds presenting to veterinary clinics with tail damage.<sup>51</sup> There are also anecdotal reports of increased tail damage in dogs left undocked in other countries, and the Council for the Promotion of Docked Dogs displays numerous graphic photos of tail damage on their web site.<sup>52</sup> No scientifically controlled studies have been reported, however, and other available anecdotal evidence, suggesting that the incidence of tail damage in European countries remains low, indicates that these few examples may be misleading. Many traditionally docked breeds for which a propensity for tail damage is claimed, simply do not engage in high risk activities. In addition, for almost all breeds that are traditionally docked, a corresponding breed can be found that engages in the same kind of activities but that has traditionally not been docked.<sup>2</sup> This calls into question the veracity of the argument, although it has not yet been established empirically whether some breeds do suffer extensive tail damage as a result of carrying out particular activities or whether some breeds may have specific tail characteristics that render them genuinely more predisposed

towards tail damage. This will only be established if controlled scientific comparisons between docked and undocked dogs of the same breed are undertaken.

Perhaps more significantly, the percentage of dogs that engage in traditional activities appears to have declined substantially in our increasingly urban communities, with most dogs now serving primarily as companion animals. While companion dogs, especially those with long thin tails, may sustain tail damage through repeatedly banging their tail on hard indoor surfaces, there is little evidence to suggest that this is a common occurrence. Indeed, one study which examined records from over 12,000 dogs treated at a university clinic found only a low incidence (47 cases) of tail damage overall. This study found no significant difference in the rate of tail injury (fractures, lacerations, dermatoses, self-trauma and neoplasia) between docked (0.31%) and undocked (0.41%) breeds so the findings do not support the argument that docking serves to reduce tail damage.<sup>53</sup> It should be noted, however, that the study did not contain undocked dogs from customarily docked breeds. As mentioned previously, only a controlled study, including equal numbers of docked and undocked dogs from the same breed, is likely to reveal whether these breeds are particularly prone to tail damage, and whether docking significantly reduces the incidence of injury in such breeds.

Another study, surveying over 2000 visits to an animal emergency clinic in Australia, found only three presentations for tail injuries, all of which reflected difficulties that occurred immediately post docking.<sup>1</sup> It would be useful to supplement this information with similar studies conducted in rural areas, where the number of dogs engaged in high risk activities may be greater, and with the type of controlled study mentioned above. In the absence of such information it is impossible to conclude that tail damage is likely to become a frequent event if docking is ceased or, conversely, to conclude that tail damage will not become more frequent. The percentage of dogs that actually engage in high-risk occupations, and their rate of tail injury relative to those sold as companion animals, must also be ascertained. Until this is done, it is impossible to sustain the argument that all dogs from certain breeds should be docked for the purpose of preventing future tail damage.

Even if it is conceded that a percentage of dogs from some traditionally docked breeds may sustain tail damage as adults if docking ceased, the argument for docking any individual dog on this basis requires the additional assumption that tail damage creates more overall suffering than does the practice of docking. This argument would be strengthened if it was established that tail damage in adult dogs is particularly painful and difficult to treat, compared with the acute, and possibly chronic, pain suffered following neonatal tail docking, but this has not been demonstrated. Until such evidence is available, the argument is moot. It is possible that some dogs are more prone to tail damage, either because of the structure of their tail or because of their traditional occupation, and that tail docking prevents substantial future pain in these dogs. It is equally possible that this is not correct.

Given a presumption against removing animal limbs without convincing evidence to justify such procedures, the absence of appropriate studies in this area represents a significant difficulty for those who support tail docking, even in those breeds that may be expected to sustain tail damage. Indeed, the removal of tails in all members of a dog breed, just because some may sustain tail damage as adults, does not appear justified unless

the degree of suffering is at least suspected to be substantial. Even here, the ethical dilemma is one of weighing potential pain from the possibility of tail damage against certain pain from what may turn out to be an unnecessary preventative measure. As a society we are often comfortable in making such judgements and readily sanction vaccination procedures in order to prevent later illness. With respect to tail docking, however, the judgement seems more akin to routinely removing tonsils or appendices from all infants in order to avoid possible tonsillitis or appendicitis in a few adults later in life. Fewer people would presumably feel comfortable making a decision of this type. Even those who would agree to dock all tails from a particular breed, where a reasonably large number of dogs seem likely to engage in a high risk activity, cannot use this argument to defend tail docking to the extent that it is currently practiced.

#### *Prevention of accumulation of faecal material*

Another claimed benefit of docking in some breeds is that it potentially reduces the accumulation of faecal material around the tail area on dogs with excessive coats. Such accumulation, it is argued, is likely to result in significant irritation of the dog by flies and possibly eventual infestation by maggots, as well as considerable inconvenience to the dog's owner.<sup>2</sup> Again, there is little direct evidence to support this claim, although studies involving sheep and cows may be instructive. In one study involving 3000 lambs on seven different farms, half of which were docked in the first week of life, it was found that undocked lambs tended to accumulate slightly more faecal material around the tail area than did their conspecifics, and that undocked lambs did become infested by flies significantly more often than those lambs that were docked.<sup>54</sup> Another recent study, involving dairy cows, found no association between docking and faecal accumulation,<sup>46</sup> however, and earlier studies (cited in Tucker et al<sup>46</sup>) found that docked dairy cattle actually carried a higher fly load than did their undocked conspecifics. In addition, there is evidence that docked cows, unable to use their tail to dislodge flies, engage in several unusual fly avoidance behaviours.<sup>55</sup> The different findings in these studies almost certainly reflect the different species studied, in that the thick wool possessed by sheep is more prone to accumulate faecal matter than the flatter coat of dairy cows. Hence, one might argue that these studies support claims that long-haired dogs, such as Old English Sheepdogs, are most likely to benefit from docking. Those who propose this argument, however, must take into account the many similarly long-haired dog breeds that are not traditionally docked, and the general observation that dogs are rarely, if ever, intensively farmed under conditions that render other coat management systems impractical. If docking is genuinely beneficial to long-haired dogs, then one might argue that all long-haired breeds should be docked and, conversely, that docking should perhaps be restricted to long-haired breeds. Unless docking is conclusively shown to cause no significant pain or suffering and the presence of a tail is demonstrated to be unimportant for other reasons, however, it is difficult to justify removal of a dog's limb for hygiene purposes. Other, less intrusive, options, such as clipping, grooming or a change of diet, clearly exist in nearly all cases.

#### *Maintaining breed quality*

Another argument, which is put forward to support a continuation of tail docking in some breeds, concerns the maintenance of breed quality. A ban on tail docking may compromise

this in several ways. First, in dog breeds that have been docked for many years, no consideration has been paid to characteristics like tail set or length. A wide variety of appearances may therefore be expected if docking ceased. Individual breeders, trying to develop and maintain a breed 'type', may feel compelled to select their breeding stock on the basis of tail characteristics alone, perhaps resulting in neglect of other important characteristics such as structural soundness or temperament. Breeder selection for traits believed to be desirable has already resulted in enormous difficulties in some breeds. Selection for large heads, for example, has created breeds unable to deliver puppies naturally, while selection for brachycephalic faces has led to breeds unable to exercise or control heat loss effectively. In breeds where some individuals are born with naturally bobbed tails, it has been claimed that selection for shorter and shorter tails, in order to mimic the docked appearance, may lead to a higher incidence of spina bifida and other spinal cord defects. A related argument is that the cessation of docking in some countries, such as Australia, would prevent export of some dogs to overseas countries where docking is accepted. Since overseas sales are typically more lucrative than local sales, this may damage the dog breeding industry in these countries and have indirect effects on the quality of dogs able to be produced.

Possibilities such as this warrant some consideration in the tail docking debate but are not compelling, especially if there are significant welfare concerns associated with the docking process. An increased incidence of spina bifida or any other related health difficulties has not been documented in those countries in which docking has been banned and improved breeder education would seem to provide a potential solution to this possibility. The economic problem may seem more intractable, although the banning of tail docking in several European countries means that undocked dogs from other countries may actually be more desirable in those countries. As with previous arguments, however, it seems difficult to maintain that all members of a particular breed should be docked simply because a handful of dogs might be expected to find homes in countries where docking is practiced. More importantly, performing any surgical manipulation of an individual dog for the purposes of export dollars or for maintaining a breed 'type' seems at odds with the ethical codes adopted by most breeder organisations. These codes typically emphasise that the welfare of individual dogs should be considered in all breeding decisions. They also typically include a clause stating that the breeder will breed only to improve the standard of the breed, and not for any commercial purpose. If there is compelling evidence to suggest that tail docking may compromise the welfare of any given dog, engaging in the practice for profit may inadvertently contravene the ethical codes of the very same breed clubs that promote the practice. Certainly, with respect to the ANKC Code of Ethics<sup>4</sup> discussed previously, any justification for docking other than direct health and welfare benefits is disallowed.

#### *Maximising quality of life for individual dogs*

As mentioned previously, a percentage of pups in some traditionally docked breeds are born with tails that are naturally shortened or bobbed. In some breeds, these natural bobs include animals born with misshapen or deformed tails. Tails may be kinked or twisted or simply short and poorly positioned. Breeders who cease docking may find that these dogs are difficult to find homes for, although an appropriate publicity

campaign may result in members of the public being prepared to offer homes to dogs with 'unusual' tails simply because they support an anti-docking policy. It is also possible, however, that there is pain or discomfort associated with the misshapen nerve endings in these deformed tails, and that the dogs, in these cases, might benefit from the docking procedure. This has not been demonstrated as yet, but the argument may provide a defensible therapeutic rationale for docking at least some dogs, on the grounds of the dog's own welfare. It does not, of course, justify docking all members of a breed, most of which will not have deformed tails.

#### *Personal preferences*

A final argument in defence of tail docking concerns the fact that some people simply prefer docked dogs. For some, this may be a convenience issue, in that docked animals may be less likely to knock valuable objects from coffee tables or hall stands and less likely to spray mud across the furniture. More common, however, are dog owners and breeders who select their breed on the basis of its distinctive characteristics, including the way the animals look, and who have a personal preference for the docked look. These people may well acknowledge that there is some pain associated with the docking process, that there is a small chance that the dog will experience ongoing physical problems or chronic pain, and that no benefits accrue to the dog directly as a result of tail docking. They insist, however, that the suffering the dog experiences is negligible or at least insignificant and, therefore, that docking can be justified on cosmetic grounds, simply because the dog will look 'better' with no tail.

Whether personal preference is sufficient to justify tail docking depends on other factors. As a community we support the 'rights' of individual members to select the type of dog they own, its gender, coat length and colour, as well as a host of other characteristics. If it were established beyond doubt that tail docking has no welfare implications, then personal preference might justify tail docking, particularly if it meant that dogs, which were otherwise left homeless or in poor homes, found loving and caring owners. On the other hand, a pertinent ethical issue here is not simply whether an individual has the 'right' to physically manipulate the appearance of a pet dog, but what the exercise of this 'right' might say about our community values.

Dogs are an extremely important part of our community and are used by many parents to teach appropriate values to their children. Some couples raise a litter of pups in order to teach their family about nurturing and care and others spend large sums of money on a sick or injured pet rather than have their children think that animals are expendable. Feeding the pet dog is one of the first responsibilities assumed by many children and regular grooming and walking schedules may be used as an enjoyable chore for which the child receives their first pocket money. Dealing responsibly with doggie behavioural challenges can be a useful way of demonstrating to children that they remain valued even when their behaviour is unacceptable, although all too often dumping the inconvenient family pet provides a model of irresponsibility that most children could do without. Pets play a large role in teaching children empathy towards animals, which has been shown to generalise to other situations.<sup>56,57</sup> They also function as important therapeutic agents in many contexts,<sup>58</sup> with visiting dogs becoming a regular sight in Australian nursing homes and hospitals.

If docking results in pain and there are no sufficiently

compensating gains *for the animal*, then it may well be a practice that can justifiably be classified as a form of abuse. According to Agnew,<sup>59</sup> definitions of animal abuse typically include three features: that the harm inflicted is socially unacceptable; intentional or deliberate; and unnecessary. Certainly, tail docking appears to fulfil the second and third criteria. Many people would feel justified in arguing that it also fulfils the first. It may be argued, therefore, that a community in which tail docking is condoned, despite fairly convincing evidence that it has no demonstrated benefits and may significantly compromise the welfare of at least some of the dogs involved, provides a paradoxical model of pet dogs. On the one hand, dogs are revered as much loved companions and family pets. On the other, they are seen as objects, able to be bought and sold, disposed of, euthanased, mistreated, exploited and surgically modified at will. While such a perception of animals does persist in many sections of our society, it is neither a defensible nor a desirable one, except within a most perverse form of ethical and moral philosophy. Moreover, since there is an established association between animal abuse and other forms of anti-social behaviour,<sup>60,61</sup> it is possible that a community in which tail docking is condoned on a large scale, purely to satisfy personal preferences, sets a dangerous precedent for at least some of its young members.

#### *Summary and conclusion*

In summary then, it seems difficult to argue that tail docking, as the widespread practice that it presently is, is justified. It cannot be defended on the basis of arguments from tradition or to satisfy a breed standard created in another time and place. Moreover, there is no clear evidence that any kind of benefit associated with tail docking exists that can outweigh the potential harm that may be caused to the animals involved. There are several reasons that may be used to support tail docking in some breeds, or at least to justify the docking of specific dogs within those breeds. These reasons concern individual dogs that are expected to engage in activities as adults in which tail damage is encountered on a frequent basis, particularly if appropriate veterinary care is unlikely to be available, those in which accumulation of faecal material may become a health issue, those born with deformed or painfully misshapen tails, and those for which the presence of a docked tail may result in a significantly improved quality of life. In all of these cases tail docking of individual dogs could potentially be justified on utilitarian grounds, but only if the expected benefits outweigh the harm that is potentially associated with the docking process, and also only if adequate anaesthesia and analgesia is provided at the time of docking.

More difficult, if not impossible, to sustain is the argument that tail docking is justified simply because some humans prefer the docked look or find it more convenient to own a tailless dog. This would constitute an acceptable reason for docking only if it was conclusively demonstrated that absolutely no harm is ever associated with the process. On the contrary, although the potential for harm cannot be proven scientifically for philosophical reasons, available evidence strongly suggests that docking may be associated with both acute and chronic pain. Relevant anatomical and physiological differences between dogs and members of our own species are minimal and there is every reason to suspect that even very young pups do experience substantial pain when their tails are removed, and that they continue to experience pain as the normal physiolog-



ical processes known to be associated with limb amputation take place. That the docking process occurs just before the critical socialisation period simply makes the practice more difficult to justify, as does the fact that it may leave some dogs with chronic physical problems and possibly unable to communicate effectively with both conspecifics and humans.

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## ANIMAL WELFARE

# Call for ban on the non-therapeutic docking of dogs' tails

A CALL for a total ban on the docking of dogs' tails for non-therapeutic purposes was made by representatives of the BVA, BSAVA and the RSPCA at a press conference held at the BVA headquarters on January 9.

Calling the docking of dogs' tails for cosmetic purposes 'painful, unnecessary and unethical', the organisations said that they hoped it would be banned through the new Animal Welfare Bill, which was to receive its second reading in the House of Commons on January 10 (see p 35).

The Bill proposes a statutory ban on 'mutilations', with certain specified exemptions, such as neutering, that are considered necessary for the overall welfare or good management of an animal (VR, October 22, 2005, vol 157, p 495). DEFRA stated, when the Bill was published, that it would not be for the Government to alter the 'status quo' on tail docking and believed that it was an issue for Parliament to decide. However, at the press conference, the three organisations urged MPs, who will be given a chance to debate the issue, to ensure that the only exemption extended to the docking of dogs' tails was for therapeutic reasons. They stressed that a new MORI poll showed that only 8 per cent of the British public supported the docking of dogs' tails for cosmetic reasons, while 75 per cent opposed the practice.

Speaking at the press conference, the BVA President, Dr Freda Scott-Park, noted that the BVA had been 'campaigning vigorously' to ensure that the non-therapeutic docking of dogs' tails was discontinued. With regards to prophylactic tail docking, she said that it was a 'thorny issue', but that there was no scientific evidence to show that undocked working dogs damaged their tails any more than docked working dogs. The BVA saw no justification for an exemption for working dogs, believing that any such exemption would result in dogs continuing to be docked.

Mr David Bowles, head of external affairs at the RSPCA, said that while cosmetic docking remained legal, so did the unhealthy but sanctioned view that some pedigree dogs would fetch a better price without their tails. Disreputable breeders would therefore continue to dock their puppies illegally. Many other countries, like Denmark and Sweden, had a total ban on tail docking and the overwhelming worldwide trend was to impose a total prohibition. It was time for the UK to follow suit.

Describing when the debate on tail docking might occur, Mr Bowles noted that, after its second reading, the Bill would go into a standing committee, and would then receive its third reading in the House of Commons. Votes on the issue would occur 'during the various processes'. The Bill would then go to the House of Lords.

● A BVA policy statement on tail docking, and a press release from the press conference are available at [www.bva.co.uk](http://www.bva.co.uk)

**The BVA Animal Welfare Foundation's (AWF's) poster 'Every dog should have a tail to tell...'** shows some breeds of traditionally docked dogs sporting their natural tails. The poster has been endorsed by the BVA, the BSAVA, the RCVS, the Blue Cross, the Dogs Trust, the PDSA, the RSPCA and Wood Green Animal Shelters. A copy of the poster was sent to every UK veterinary practice in December 2005 as part of the BVA's campaign to achieve a ban on non-therapeutic docking under the Animal Welfare Bill. Further copies can be obtained from the AWF website, [www.bva-awf.org.uk](http://www.bva-awf.org.uk), or by contacting Clare Lynch, e-mail: [clarel@bva.co.uk](mailto:clarel@bva.co.uk). A similar poster was originally produced by the Foundation in 1992 before a ruling that from July 1, 1993, only veterinary surgeons could dock puppies' tails





avian influenza situation and their possible implications for foodborne transmission in the UK. The ACMSF concluded that the recent information on avian influenza had not changed its risk assessment and its advice remained the same. It said that the risk of acquiring avian influenza through the food chain was low and that there was no direct evidence to support this route of infec-

tion. It pointed out that evidence from human infection indicated that direct contact with infected birds was the main risk factor and that the consumption of infected chickens had not been identified as a risk factor.

The FSA says that it does not consider that the current outbreaks of avian influenza in countries outside the UK pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

#### ANIMAL WELFARE

## Internet consultation reveals EU citizens' interest in welfare

THE results of a European Union (EU)-wide online consultation on the welfare of farm animals were published at the end of last year. The consultation, which closed on December 20, 2005, had been held to gather information about public attitudes to welfare and the protection of farmed animals to help inform the preparation of a Community Action Plan on Animal Welfare and Protection, which is due to be published at the end of January.

Over 44,500 responses to the consultation were received, with the greatest number being submitted by German citizens (25.3 per cent). The UK contributed 5.8 per cent of the responses. Questions asked covered matters such as the general welfare of farmed animals in the EU, as well as the welfare of specific species, the sources of information about welfare that consumers use and the use of food labelling to indicate the welfare conditions under which an animal was raised.

When asked their opinion on the level of welfare and protection of animals farmed within the EU, 64.4 per cent of respondents rated it as 'very poor' or 'poor'. In particular, 62.8 per cent felt that the welfare of broiler chickens was 'very poor' and 58.7 per cent felt that the welfare of laying hens was 'very poor'. The welfare of pigs was rated 'very poor' by 48.8 per cent of respondents; however, the welfare of dairy cows was thought to be 'very poor' by just over one fifth of respondents (21.4 per cent), while that of beef cattle was regarded as 'very poor' by 33.9 per cent.

Respondents were asked a series of questions concerning where they got their information about animal welfare within their own country. The most important source of information overall was animal protection organisations, with 44.4 per cent of respondents rating this source as 'very important'; books, magazines, newspapers and leaflets, were the next most important source of

information, with 31.7 per cent rating them as 'very important'. Information from government was felt to be 'very important' by only 11.7 per cent, while 12.5 per cent gave this rating to information from farmers' organisations. A majority of respondents (60.6 per cent) did not believe that consumers currently received enough information about the conditions of welfare and protection that animals are farmed under in the EU.

A number of questions were also asked about how useful the various sources of information could be: 63.2 per cent of respondents said that films, video, television and radio could be a very useful source of information; 37.5 per cent responded that government sources could be very useful.

In terms of food labelling, 78 per cent of respondents 'certainly' wanted food products to be labelled more clearly to indicate the welfare conditions under which they were sourced.

Overall, 78.3 per cent of people who responded to the survey believed that more 'certainly' needed to be done to improve the level of welfare and the protection of animals farmed within the EU, and 80.8 per cent said that 'certainly' the EU should do more to promote a greater awareness of animal welfare and protection internationally. With regard to imported foods, 87.1 per cent of respondents said that such foods should be produced under conditions of animal welfare and protection that were at least as high as those applied in their own country.

The possible effect of improved animal welfare standards was also investigated: 80 per cent of respondents said that they believed that producing food under better welfare conditions would result in better animal health; 56.9 per cent said it would result in better food safety and 74.6 per cent that it would result in more ethically acceptable food products.

#### ANIMAL WELFARE

## Animal Welfare Bill granted second reading

THE Animal Welfare Bill was granted a second reading in the House of Commons on January 10 following a debate lasting almost six hours.

Introducing the Bill, the Secretary of State at DEFRA, Mrs Margaret Beckett, called it 'the most significant and comprehensive proposal for animal welfare legislation for nearly a century'. It would create a more flexible statutory framework, setting out key principles, but leaving detailed matters to secondary legislation. 'The Government believe that flexibility is critical if our legislation is to keep pace with the expected advances in animal welfare,' she said.

Mrs Beckett reiterated that the Government was 'inclined to support the status quo' on the issue of non-therapeutic docking of dogs' tails (VR, October 22, 2005, vol 157, p 495); however, she appreciated that there were 'genuine and strongly held views on both sides of the argument'. The Government's intention was that Parliament should decide the issue, and it hoped that MPs would have the opportunity to express their views during the passage of the Bill.

The Bill now passes to a standing committee, which will consider the individual clauses within the Bill and may amend it, before reporting back to the House of Commons. The standing committee proceedings should be brought to a close on January 26.

#### ANIMAL HEALTH

## Industry launches BVD control campaign

AN industry-led campaign to control and eradicate bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) throughout Britain was launched on January 5. Veterinary surgeons and representatives of the beef and dairy sectors have agreed initially to establish two working groups to develop an outline strategy for the disease and a communications plan.

At a recent meeting hosted by DEFRA, researchers and representatives of the British Cattle Veterinary Association and the cattle industry agreed that, if the industry was prepared to take the lead, there was enough knowledge and suffi-

● A summary of the responses to the consultation can be downloaded from [http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/consultations/action\\_plan\\_farmed\\_background\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/consultations/action_plan_farmed_background_en.htm)

## NEWS &amp; REPORTS

cient tools available to significantly reduce the disease. Britain is unlike other EU member states in that it currently has no BVD control policy.

Commenting on the new campaign, Professor Joe Brownlie, of the Royal Veterinary College, said: 'BVD is a serious disease that affects many cattle farms in one way or another, and it is causing significant financial losses for many farmers. Industry organisations in most other EU member states are undertaking eradication campaigns and, unless we get to grips with this serious problem, Great Britain will be left behind.'

## VETERINARY MEDICINES

## Animal medicines inspectorate moves to the VMD

THE Animal Medicines Inspectorate (AMI) of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) became part of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) on January 1.

Explaining the rationale behind the move, the VMD says that, as a result of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005 coming into force last year (*VR*, November 5, 2005, vol 157, p 599), the RPSGB's statutory obligations in relation

to animal medicines under the Medicines Act have been removed. It is hoped that moving the AMI to the VMD will preserve its skills and expertise and will benefit both organisations.

The role of the AMI, which inspects and approves manufacturers of medicated/zootechnical animal feedingstuffs and retailers of certain restricted veterinary medicines under an agreement with the VMD, will remain unchanged in the short term, but will be reviewed during 2006. The five inspectors will continue to operate regionally, with an administrative office based in either Stoneleigh or Coventry.

Mr Steve Dean, chief executive of the VMD, said that the AMI would reinforce the core strategic aims of the VMD and provide improvements to the coordination and scope of its enforcement activities.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES

## Increase in charges for CITES permits

THE charges for licences to trade in certain endangered species are to be increased later this year. Announcing the increased fees last month, DEFRA said that the charge for all import permits, export permits and sales certificates would increase to £20 from

early 2006, followed a year later by a further increase to £25. Concessions will apply to applications made for educational, enforcement, scientific and zoological purposes, when a fee of £10 per application will be charged. DEFRA will retain the right to waive fees where it considers it appropriate.

Article 30 certificates (which allow scientific institutions in the EU to keep specified endangered species) and applications to become breeders registered under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) will be assessed without payment of a fee.

DEFRA consulted on proposals to increase the level of charges in 2004 (*VR*, April 24, 2004, vol 154, p 518). It points out that the charges for processing licensing applications have not been revised since 1997, and that the new level of fee is much lower than that suggested in the consultation document.

The biodiversity minister, Mr Jim Knight, said that the increased charges would be reinvested in the CITES licensing and enforcement systems, ensuring that it maintained its robust high standards. He believed that the new fees struck the right balance between increasing revenue from fees and ensuring that people continued to comply with the controls.

DEFRA is currently drafting legislation to bring these changes into force. It is anticipated that the first change will come into force on April 1, 2006, with the second increase following a year later.

## Papers in this week's Veterinary Record

### Effect of PrP genotype on risk of clinical scrapie in sheep

KNOWLEDGE of the associations between the prion protein (PrP) genotype of sheep and their risk of clinical scrapie has been used to develop genotyping and breeding programmes that aim to eradicate the disease. On p 43, Ms Sue Tongue and colleagues calculate the relative risk of the development of clinical scrapie conferred by different PrP genotypes. Genotype data were obtained from the Scrapie Notifications Database of Great Britain (the case population) and three other, non-case populations, and used to calculate the odds ratio (OR) of clinical scrapie developing in sheep of a given PrP genotype, compared with the wild-type ARQ/ARQ genotype. The genotypes ARH/VRQ and ARQ/VRQ had estimated ORs ranging between 5 and 20, indicating an increased risk of clinical scrapie, and for VRQ/VRQ the ORs were greater than 20. Eight genotypes had ORs less than 1, indicating a lower risk of scrapie than that associated with ARQ/ARQ.

### Campylobacter species in cats and dogs in animal shelters

*Campylobacter* species are zoonotic pathogens that can cause gastrointestinal disease in human beings and animals; animals can also be asymptomatic carriers. On p 51, Ms Els Acke and colleagues study the prevalence of *Campylobacter* species in cats and dogs living in two animal shelters in Ireland. Rectal swabs or faecal samples were taken from 120 dogs and cats in shelter 1, in which one kitten had diarrhoea, and rectal swabs were taken from 46 dogs in shelter 2, 22 of which had diarrhoea. The swabs from 24 of 47 dogs (51.1 per cent) and 36 of 48 cats (75 per cent) at shelter 1 yielded *Campylobacter* species on culture; 40 of the dogs (87 per cent) at shelter 2, including 19 of the 22 with gastrointestinal signs, were positive. In shelter 1 the prevalence was significantly higher in cats than dogs, and in animals less than six months of age than older animals; no significant difference with age was observed in shelter 2.

### Parasite control methods in sheep in south-west England

THERE is little information on the strategies used by sheep farmers to control parasites in their flocks, or of their perceptions of anthelmintic resistance. On p 55, Ms Dallas Fraser and colleagues describe a questionnaire survey of 90 sheep farmers in south-west England on their parasite management strategies. The farmers used a variety of strategies, with most based on information from the farming press, agricultural merchants and, to a lesser extent, their veterinary surgeon. Macrocyclic lactones were the most commonly used products, and the choice was based primarily on experience. Sixty per cent of the farmers expressed concerns about the development of anthelmintic resistance; 28 per cent had experienced resistance, mainly to benzimidazoles. The authors state that resistance is likely to be more common than reported, and emphasise the importance of veterinary surgeons' involvement in developing sustainable parasite control strategies.



## Call for ban on the non-therapeutic docking of dogs' tails

*Veterinary Record* 2006 158: 34  
doi: 10.1136/vr.158.2.34-a

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## ANIMAL WELFARE

## Tight deadline for comments on tail docking legislation

THE Government is allowing only eight weeks for the submission of comments on two draft statutory instruments that will be among the first pieces of secondary legislation to be enacted under the new Animal Welfare Act 2006, which received Royal Assent on November 8 (VR, November 11, 2006, vol 159, p 646).

The draft Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations and the draft Docking of Working Dogs' Tails (England) Regulations were published for consultation on November 21, and comments have been invited by January 8, 2007. The Government says that the shorter than usual consultation period (12 weeks are normally allowed) 'is because of the short time between the passing of the Animal Welfare Act by Parliament and the need to bring the regulations into force'. It considers that, because the consultation does not contain any major policy changes that have not been made public already, an eight-week consultation period is acceptable. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 will come into force on April 6, 2007.

The new Act will ban certain 'mutilations' – procedures that involve interference with the sensitive tissues or bone structure of an animal other than for the purposes of medical treatment. However, the Act permits the use of secondary legislation to exempt a number of procedures from this general ban on mutilations. The Government notes that any procedure, whether listed in the regulations or not, will continue to be permitted if performed for medical reasons.

The docking of dogs' tails has been explicitly excluded from the general ban on mutilations as it is dealt with in a separate section of the Act. Again, the Act permits the Secretary of State to make regulations about how working dogs that will be exempt from a ban on tail docking are to be certificated and how exempted dogs are to be identified.

The consultation exercise is being held to determine which procedures should be exempted from the general ban and also to determine which dogs should be exempted from the ban on tail docking, as well as the means of identification and certification. Responses are invited in the form of answers to 38 questions that are asked in the consultation document.

### Mutilations

The draft Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations set out the general circumstances in which a permitted procedure should be conducted – namely, in accordance with the requirements of the legislation, in such a way as to minimise the pain and suffering it causes to the animal, in hygienic conditions, and in accordance with good practice. However, they do not specify the exact circumstances in which each procedure may be performed. The Government says that this would result in the legislation becoming unnecessarily over-prescriptive and would risk omitting some circumstances in which it would be appropriate to allow a procedure. It recognises that 'animal owners and vets consider that some flexibility and discretion are necessary in managing animals'.

The Government also says that the question of who performs the various procedures described in the draft regulations is beyond the scope of the consultation because DEFRA is carrying out a separate, and much wider, review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act. It considers it inappropriate to pre-empt this.

The regulations set out which procedures are being considered for exemption from the general ban on mutilations. Procedures have been considered for exemption on the basis that they either secure an overall welfare benefit or they are recognised management practices. They fall into the general categories of:

- Procedures for controlling reproduction;
- Procedures used for the purposes of identification;
- Other management procedures.

With regard to procedures for controlling reproduction, vasectomy, spaying, castration, ovum transplantation and embryo collection and transfer are all proposed as procedures that will be permitted. The Government states that the only change to the status quo in this area will be a requirement for spaying to be conducted under anaesthetic. It notes that, currently, this is not a necessity, although it is routinely used.

As far as identification procedures are concerned, the Government is not proposing any changes to the status quo and procedures such as freeze branding, tattooing, microchipping and ear tipping, among others, will continue to be permitted.

Procedures that fall into the 'other management procedures' category include dehorning of cattle, sheep and goats, disbudding of cattle, sheep and goats, and dewclaw removal in dogs. The Government says that it would particularly welcome views on whether the disbudding of calves aged seven days or less by chemical cauterisation should be banned; what the preferred method is for disbudding goats (chemical cauterisation or thermocautery) and why; and also whether it is necessary to maintain an exemption for the disbudding of lambs.

There are also a number of procedures that the Government notes are currently legal that will not be included in the list of permitted procedures and will therefore become illegal once the new legislation is introduced. These include the removal of anal sacs, the castration of male birds by surgical methods, devoicing of birds, dogs, horses and mules, ear cropping in dogs, the insertion of prosthetic testicles in dogs, claw removal (with the exception of dewclaws) and the drilling of tortoise shells. The Government lists 21 such procedures in total and asks specifically whether each should not be exempted from the general ban on mutilations.

### Docking of dogs' tails

The draft regulations dealing with tail docking of dogs detail the requirements that will have to be met before a veterinary surgeon can certify a dog as one that is permitted to have its tail docked, and therefore dock the animal, and also list the evidence that the veterinary surgeon must be shown as proof of meeting the requirements.

The draft regulations specify which dogs will be exempt from the general ban on tail docking: these include spaniels and terriers of any type or combination of types, as well as types of hunt point retrievers such as the Hungarian vizsla, the Italian spinone and the weimaraner. The draft regulations also specify the types of evidence that must be presented to a veterinary surgeon by an owner or keeper to support a request for docking. These include official identification, such as that from the armed forces, emergency rescue services or police authority. Other forms of permissible evidence will be evidence that the dog will be used for work in connection with lawful pest control, a current shotgun or firearm certificate issued to the owner or to the agent or employee

- The draft regulations and accompanying documents are available from [www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/dogtail-mutilation/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/dogtail-mutilation/index.htm), and DEFRA has invited comments by January 8, 2007.

The BVA is currently formulating its response. Members who wish to contribute are asked to submit their comments to the Association by January 1, 2007, linking their remarks to the specific questions posed in DEFRA's consultation document

of the owner most likely to be using the dog in connection with the lawful shooting of animals, or a letter from, among others, a gamekeeper or person with shooting rights, stating that the breeder of the dog to be docked is known to him and that dogs bred by that breeder have been used on his land or in his shoot or for pest control purposes.

In order to dock a working dog legally veterinary surgeons will have to certify that they are satisfied that the dam of the dog is of one of the specified types, that they reasonably believe that the dog is not more than five days old, and that the owner of the dog, or another person they reasonably believe

to be representing the owner, has shown them the required evidence.

The draft regulations also include a draft of the certificate that will have to be issued by veterinary surgeons to show that a dog has been docked legally. This certificate will also have a section to be completed when the dog is permanently identified as required by the legislation. The Government considers that microchipping is the only way to uniquely and permanently identify a legally docked dog, but says that because of the size of the puppy and the possible risk of infection, the microchipping procedure may be carried out at a different time from the docking of the tail.



## Tight deadline for comments on tail docking legislation

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# Papers

## Risk factors for tail injuries in dogs in Great Britain

G. Diesel, D. Pfeiffer, S. Crispin, D. Brodbelt

**The aim of the current study was to quantify the risk of tail injury, to evaluate the extent to which tail docking reduces this risk, and to identify other major risk factors for tail injury in dogs in Great Britain. A nested case-control study was conducted during 2008 and 2009. Data were obtained from a stratified random sample of veterinary practices throughout Great Britain, and questionnaires were sent to owners of dogs with tail injuries and owners of a randomly selected sample of dogs without tail injuries. The risks of injury were reported adjusting for the sampling approach, and mixed effects logistic regression was used to develop a multivariable model for risk factors associated with tail injury. Two hundred and eighty-one tail injuries were recorded from a population of 138,212 dogs attending 52 participating practices. The weighted risk of tail injuries was 0.23 per cent (95 per cent confidence interval 0.20 to 0.25 per cent). Thirty-six per cent of injuries were reportedly related to injuries sustained in the home, 17.5 per cent were outdoor-related injuries, 14.4 per cent were due to the tail being caught in a door, for 16.5 per cent the cause was unknown and the remainder were due to other causes. Dogs with a wide angle of wag and dogs kept in kennels were at significantly higher risk of sustaining a tail injury. Dogs with docked tails were significantly less likely to sustain a tail injury; however, approximately 500 dogs would need to be docked in order to prevent one tail injury. English springer spaniels, cocker spaniels, greyhounds, lurchers and whippets were all at significantly higher risk when compared to labradors and other retrievers. Differences between countries (England, Scotland and Wales) and between rural and urban environments were not significant.**

THE docking of dogs' tails remains controversial and centres on whether non-therapeutic docking reduces the risk of tail injury sufficiently to justify the ethical concerns of a prophylactic intervention (Orlans and others 1998, Bennett and Perini 2003). A ban on non-therapeutic tail docking was introduced in Great Britain in early 2007. In Scotland, a complete ban was introduced, in Wales the ban was introduced with specific working breed exemptions, and in England the ban was introduced with specific working breed-type exemptions (Anon 2006, Defra 2007). The exemptions include dogs involved in law enforcement, the armed forces, emergency rescue, lawful pest control and lawful shooting of animals. These variations in legislation provided a unique opportunity to evaluate the association between docking and tail injuries in a population of dogs including substantial numbers of docked and undocked animals, and to assess whether

country (England, Scotland or Wales) and location (rural or urban) are risk factors in themselves.

A previous study conducted in Edinburgh in 1985 showed that tail injuries were rare, with the estimated prevalence being 0.39 per cent (Darke and others 1985). That study estimated that not docking a dog's tail increased the risk of a tail injury 1.28 times, but this was found to be not significant (95 per cent confidence interval [CI] 0.61 to 2.69 per cent). A more recent survey, which recorded the types of injuries and causes of lameness in dogs involved in game shooting, showed a highly significant association between tail injuries and being undocked among springer spaniels ( $P=0.008$ ) and cocker spaniels ( $P=0.004$ ) (Houlton 2008). Both these studies represented a subset of the dog population in Great Britain and were conducted before implementation of the restrictions on docking. Additionally, the study by Houlton (2008) of working dogs relied on a convenience sample, and the study by Darke and others (1985) is more than 20 years old; therefore, further work to evaluate tail injuries in Great Britain was considered necessary. The aim of this study was to quantify the risk of tail injuries, to ascertain the extent to which docking reduces the risk of tail injury, and to identify other major risk factors for tail injury in dogs attending veterinary practices in Great Britain.

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Provenance: not commissioned;  
externally peer reviewed

### Materials and methods Participants and procedure

A case-control study design was used nested within a cohort of dogs attending veterinary practices between March 2008 and March 2009. Power calculations carried out before the study estimated that approximately 250 dogs with tail injuries would be required. However, these calculations were revised on the basis of preliminary estimates of the prevalence of dogs with docked tails among the dogs recruited into the

study. The revised sample size calculations estimated that approximately 90 to 120 cases of tail injury would be required based on the detection of an odds ratio of 0.3 to 0.5, assuming that the prevalence of docking among dogs was approximately 12 to 14 per cent (95 per cent confidence level, 80 per cent power, case:control ratio of 1:4) (Win Episcople 2.0; CLIVE).

A list of mixed and companion animal veterinary practices was taken from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Practice Register (RCVS 2008). This list was stratified by country (England, Scotland or Wales,) and then the list for each country was stratified by location (rural or urban) based on the postcode classification of the practice location (Office for National Statistics 2006). A sample of veterinary practices was then randomly selected, using random number generation, from each of these lists. The practices in the sample were approached to determine whether they were using one of seven specified computerised practice management systems (RoboVet or PremVet [Vet Solutions], Midshires or Ventana [Consulsoft], Teleos [Teleos Systems], Vet-one [Gemhader Software] or RxWorks [RX Works]), and whether they were willing to participate in the study. Data were extracted from the practice database of all participating practices, to obtain a list of all dogs that had attended the veterinary practice in the previous 12-month period and their clinical histories. A free-text search was used to identify all dogs that had sustained a tail injury by searching for the word 'tail'. The search detected all words containing 'tail' whether there was a space or not before or after the word.

Cases were defined as any dog presented to the veterinary practice within the previous 12 months for treatment of a tail injury, including fractures, dislocations, lacerations, contusions, self-trauma and neoplasia. Tail problems relating to neoplasia and self-trauma were included as it has been reported anecdotally that in some of these cases there is an underlying chronic traumatic injury that eventually leads to the development of a tumour or a self-traumatic injury. A list of all dogs that had attended each of the participating veterinary practices during the same one-year period as the case dogs was obtained, and control dogs were then randomly selected from this list by random number allocation. For each case, approximately four control dogs were randomly selected. Dogs selected as controls that had sustained a tail injury within the past 12 months but had not been treated by a veterinarian were excluded as controls. Dogs suffering from water tail/limber tail were excluded from the study as these injuries are not well understood and it is thought that they are due to muscle fatigue. It was also thought that including these dogs as cases would result in a weakening of the power of the study and the possibility of examining associations between risk factors and typical tail injuries.

### Questionnaire design

The owners of the selected cases and controls were sent a questionnaire during 2008 and 2009. The questionnaire was designed and pretested before the study. The questionnaire was reviewed by five epidemiologists and eight clinicians. It was then pretested on five dog owners to ensure it was clear and easy to follow. The questionnaire was also translated into Welsh. A prepaid reply envelope was supplied with the questionnaire, in addition to a disposable tape measure to enable owners to measure the length and height of their dog. The questionnaire investigated aspects relating to the size, temperament (as perceived by the owner) and breed of the dog, the home environment, whether the dog was used as a working dog and the nature of any tail injuries (Table 1) (questionnaire available on request from GD). Tail wag angle was assessed by asking the owners to estimate how far the tail deviated from the midline position by selecting one of three options provided in the form of a diagram. Dog owners who returned their questionnaire were entered into a monthly prize draw in order to increase the response rate. A second questionnaire and reminder letter were sent to all owners if no response was received within four weeks.

### Data analysis

All data were entered into a pre-designed database with data entry validation rules (Access 2003; Microsoft). The data were checked, cleaned and then exported to Stata version 9 (Stata Corp) for analysis. The weighted risk estimates were calculated accounting for the sampling strategy by using the Stata 'survey' commands. Additional

**TABLE 1: Risk factors evaluated in a case-control study of tail injuries in dogs in Great Britain**

Factor	
Dog characteristics	Age, sex, neuter status, breed, weight, height, tail length, body length, coat length, coat type, body condition, docked before injury, tail shape, tail hair, temperament, tail wag angle, tail wag in circles, bottom wag, style of tail wag
Owner details/type of activity	Country, urban/rural, veterinary practice, uses dog for work, shows dog, where is dog kept, type of property, how many other dogs owned, frequency of exercise, exercise hours, exercise environment, type of work, frequency of work, work hours, work environment

risk approximations were calculated for working and non-working dogs, for docked and non-docked dogs, and for individual breeds or breed types based on estimated denominator data. This was calculated by using the proportion calculated from the data relating to the control dogs enrolled in the study. 'Attributable risk', 'number needed to treat' and 'population attributable risk fraction' were calculated where appropriate.

The analysis assessing risk factors initially involved univariable screening. This was done using chi-squared tests of association and univariable logistic regression. The 'xtlogit' command (with country and urban/rural as fixed effects and veterinary practice identity as a random effect) was used in order to account for the clustering in the dataset. All variables were assessed for collinearity using a correlation matrix, and where two variables were found to be highly collinear a decision was made to exclude one variable from the model based on considerations including a priori importance of the risk factors, strength of associations and missing values (Dohoo and others 2003). All continuous variables were assessed graphically for normality. All variables that had a  $P < 0.2$  on univariable screening were put forward for multivariable analysis. Manual forward and backward stepwise multivariable mixed-effects logistic regression models were developed assessing the addition or removal of individual variables using the likelihood ratio test. Statistical significance was set at the 5 per cent level. If the likelihood ratio test was not significant, it was also checked whether the variable had a confounding effect by assessing changes in the coefficients and significance of other variables in the model before being removed. All final model variables were assessed for interactions. The fit of the model was assessed using Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test on the basic logistic regression model. As the 'xt' commands in Stata version 9 do not support goodness-of-fit tests, further diagnostics, including the calculation of leverage and delta-betas, were used to identify any outliers or highly influential observations. The 'quadchk' command was used on the final 'xtlogit' model to assess the sensitivity of the quadrature approximation. The change in coefficients was less than 0.01 per cent and therefore it can be assumed that the choice of quadrature did not significantly affect the results. Due to the a priori interest in working dogs, the variable 'work' was forced into all models to assess its significance. Several multivariable models were developed in order to assess various aspects of the data. A model was developed for all dogs in the study using different breed classifications, for spaniels only and for working dogs only.

The breed, sex and age of the dogs owned by non-responders among the cases and controls were compared with those that did respond in order to assess the representativeness of cases and controls. Additionally, the types of injuries recorded among the non-responding cases were compared to those of the cases whose owners did respond.

### Results

A total of 314 veterinary practices were contacted initially. Of these practices, 198 either refused to participate or did not have a suitable computer system to be eligible for inclusion in the study. The remaining 116 practices were then sent a letter requesting their participation in the study, and 52 agreed to participate. The practices that did not agree to participate stated one of the following reasons: they did not want to participate in a study looking at such a topical issue, they did not have the time, or they were uncomfortable



**TABLE 2: Number of dogs that were tail docked and that were used for work among the cases and controls in a study of the risk factors of tail injury**

	Cases			Controls		
	Working	Not working	Total	Working	Not working	Total
Docked	0	2	2	9	26	35
Not docked	12	83	95	8	177	185
Total	12	85	97	17	203	220*

\* Two owners did not state whether or not their dog's tail was docked

**TABLE 3: Number of dogs of specific breeds/breed types, and whether they were or were not used for work, among the cases and controls**

Breed/breed type	Cases			Controls		
	Working	Not working	Total	Working	Not working	Total
Labradors and other retrievers	3	16	19	4	34	38
English springer spaniels	4	13	17	7	9	16
Cocker spaniels	1	3	4	1	4	5
Border collies, rough collies	1	5	6	2	30	32
Jack Russell terriers	0	1	1	1	14	15
Lurchers, greyhounds, whippets	2	14	16	0	6	6
Other	1	33	34	2	108	110
Total	12	85	97	17	205	222

contacting their clients with questionnaires. The 52 participating veterinary practices provided clinical records for 138,212 dogs that had attended the practices within the previous 12-month period. A total of 281 cases were identified among these clinical records, but questionnaires could not be sent to all cases at the request of some practices. Three practices withdrew from participating in the study after their database had been queried, meaning that data were available on the number of cases and number of dogs attending the practice but the owners of these cases could not be sent questionnaires. Additionally, there were some cases that had recently died or been euthanased; the veterinary practice requested that a questionnaire not be sent to the owners of these dogs. A total of 224 questionnaires were sent out to owners of cases and 799 to owners of controls. Of all the cases, 97 owners responded (response rate 43.3 per cent), and 227 of the owners of controls responded (response rate 28.4 per cent). Five controls were excluded because these dogs had sustained a tail injury in the previous 12-month period but had not been seen or treated by a veterinarian. Among these five controls, two working dogs had sustained an injury while working and the other three dogs had sustained a household injury. One of these dogs had a docked tail before sustaining an injury. The proportion of male dogs among the controls was 48 per cent and among the cases it was 53 per cent. The mean (sd) age of the controls was 6.3 (4.2) years and of the cases it was 5.7 (3.8) years.

There was no significant difference between the proportions of specific breeds among the cases that responded and the cases that did not respond ( $P=0.351$ ). Additionally, there was no significant difference in age ( $P=0.985$ ) or sex ( $P=0.686$ ) between the case responders and non-responders. Similar results were found when comparing the responders and non-responders among the controls (breeds  $P=0.974$ ; age  $P=0.974$ ; sex  $P=0.561$ ). There was no significant difference in the type of tail injuries recorded in the clinical data between the case responders and case non-responders ( $P=0.873$ ).

Tables 2 and 3 show some descriptive results of the number of dogs that were docked, the number used for work and the number of dogs of specific breeds among the cases and controls enrolled in the study. Among the 29 working dogs, all were used for game shooting except for five dogs: one of these was a racing greyhound, one was a German shepherd police dog and three were herding collies.

## Risk of tail injury

The weighted risk of tail injuries seen by veterinarians across all regions was 0.23 per cent/year (95 per cent CI 0.20 to 0.25 per cent). The risks of tail injury in each country and location are given in Table 4.

Based on the proportion of working and non-working dogs among the cases and controls, the approximated risk among working dogs was 0.29 per cent (32 injuries among 10,974 dogs, 95 per cent CI 0.21 to 0.43 per cent) and the approximated risk among non-working dogs was 0.19 per cent (249 injuries among 127,238 dogs, 95 per cent CI 0.17 to 0.22 per cent); 29 was the number of working dogs among those that did respond, while 32 is the approximated number of working dog injuries expected had all the owners responded to the questionnaire, out of the total 10,974 clinical records. Working dogs had a statistically significantly higher risk than non-working dogs ( $P=0.032$ ). The approximated risk for docked dogs was 0.03 per cent (six injuries among 21,285 dogs, 95 per cent CI 0.01 to 0.06 per cent) and for undocked dogs it was 0.23 per cent (275 injuries among 116,927 dogs, 95 per cent CI 0.21 to 0.27 per cent). Undocked dogs had a significantly higher risk than docked dogs ( $P<0.001$ ). The attributable risk was calculated from these risk approximations and was found to be 0.20 per cent for docking, and therefore the 'number needed to treat' to prevent one tail injury was 500 dogs. The population attributable risk fraction for docking was a decrease of 11.9 per cent. Risk approximations were also calculated for breeds, and these results are given in Table 5.

## Types of tail injury

Of the 97 cases for which a questionnaire was completed, 70.1 per cent (68 cases) were reported to be lacerations and bleeding, 20.6 per cent (20 cases) fractures or dislocations, and of the rest (9.3 per cent, nine cases) six cases were self-trauma and three cases were neoplasia. The questionnaires reported that 44.3 per cent (43 cases) were recurrent tail injuries (based on the owners' assessments) and 53.6 per cent (52 cases) were not recurrent; in two cases it was not stated whether the injury was recurrent. According to the owners' assessments, 36.1 per cent (35 cases) of the injuries were caused by the dog knocking its tail against a wall, kennel wall or another household object, 17.5 per cent (17 cases) were injuries from undergrowth or fences during exercise or work, 14.4 per cent (14 cases) were due to the tail being caught in a door, 15.5 per cent (15 cases) were due to other various causes, and in 16.5 per cent (16 cases) the cause was unknown. The majority of injuries (57.7 per cent, 56 cases) were treated conservatively with antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and dressings, 30.9 per cent (30 cases) resulted in amputation of the tail, and 11.4 per cent (11 cases) did not require any specific treatment.

## Risk factors for tail injuries

The major risk factors for tail injuries identified in the final multi-variable model are shown in Table 6. Breed was an important factor: English springer spaniels had 5.97 times the odds of sustaining an injury compared with labradors and other retrievers, and greyhounds, lurchers and whippets had 6.85 times the odds. Dogs with docked tails had 0.03 times the odds of an injury compared with the dogs that were undocked. Dogs kept in kennels during the day, at night or both had 3.60 times the odds of sustaining a tail injury compared with those that were not kept in a kennel. Also, dogs that wagged their tails in a very wide angle had 3.72 times the odds, and those that wagged their tail in a moderately wide angle had 2.91 times the odds, of sustaining an injury compared with the dogs that wagged their tails in only a narrow angle.

Other factors (the height and weight of the dog, body length, coat type and type of tail hair) were also shown to be significant factors (results not shown). However, these factors were not included in the final model as there was strong collinearity with the variable breed, which increased the standard errors of the estimates for breed and made the model unstable.

The variable 'work' was forced into the model due to the a priori interest in work as a risk factor, despite this variable not being significant. A variable classifying dogs into 'game shooting', 'other type of work' or 'no work' was also assessed and found to be not significant. There were no interactions found and the fit of the model was good.

**TABLE 4: Risk estimates for tail injury among dogs living in different countries within Great Britain and locations (rural or urban). No significant difference was found between any countries or locations**

Category	Number of cases	Number of dogs at risk	Risk estimate (%)	95% CI
England			0.17	0.13-0.21
Urban	65	36,509	0.18	0.14-0.22
Rural	22	13,442	0.16	0.09-0.23
Scotland			0.22	0.18-0.26
Urban	48	25,816	0.19	0.14-0.24
Rural	72	29,679	0.24	0.18-0.30
Wales			0.23	0.18-0.28
Urban	72	31,646	0.23	0.18-0.28
Rural	2	1120	0.18	0.00-0.43
Weighted risk for Great Britain	281	138,212	0.23	0.20-0.25

CI Confidence interval

**TABLE 5: Risk approximations for tail injuries in dogs of different breeds/breed types**

Breed/breed type	Number of cases	Approximate number of dogs at risk	Risk estimate (%)	95% CI
Labradors and other retrievers	56	23,911	0.23	0.18-0.30
English springer spaniels	47	10,366	0.45	0.34-0.60
Cocker spaniels	12	3179	0.37	0.22-0.66
Border collies, rough collies	18	20,732	0.08	0.06-0.14
Jack Russell terriers	3	9675	0.03	0.01-0.09
Lurchers, greyhounds, whippets	47	3870	1.22	0.90-1.61
Other	98	66,479	0.15	0.12-0.18

CI Confidence interval

(Hosmer-Lemeshow model fit statistic  $P=0.733$ ). The area under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve for the logistic regression model was 0.7854 and there were no particularly high leverage or delta-beta values (defined as delta-beta > 1.0, leverage > 2 k/n, where k is the number variables and n is the number of observations) (Hosmer and Lemeshow 2000), which indicated no highly influential observations and supported good model fit.

Due to the high level of collinearity of many variables with breed and the increased odds in spaniels, the model was repeated restricting the analysis to only spaniels (cocker and English springer spaniels). The results of this model are shown in Table 7. This shows that whether a dog's tail was docked or not was the most important factor, with docked dogs having 0.008 times the odds of sustaining a tail injury compared to dogs with undocked tails. The dog's sex was included in the model as it had a confounding effect on docking. 'Work' was forced into the model but was found to be non-significant. The fit of the model was good and the area under the ROC curve was 0.930. The model development was repeated using the different classifications of breeds according to the current English and Welsh legislation for tail docking (results not shown). The results of these models showed similar results to the model shown in Table 6. A model was also developed restricting the analysis to just working dogs. In this case, docked dogs were at significantly lower risk of sustaining a tail injury compared with those with undocked tails, and dogs kept in kennels were at a significantly higher risk (results not shown).

## Discussion

This study has been able to estimate the risk of tail injuries in Great Britain and identify major factors associated with a tail injury occurring in a large population of dogs attending a veterinary practice. The overall risk of injury was low, and trauma not associated with work accounted for the majority of injuries seen by participating veterinary practices. Work in itself was not a major risk factor, and characteristics such as the dogs' breed, tail wag angle and docking status were more

important factors associated with tail injury in practice-attending dogs.

The overall weighted risk of tail injuries in dogs in Great Britain was estimated to be 0.23 per cent per year, which was lower than the prevalence (0.39 per cent) found by Darke and others (1985). This suggests that tail injuries requiring treatment in the general dog population of Great Britain could be rarer than previously thought. The difference in results between the studies may be due to differences in the population studied. In the study by Darke and others (1985), the study population was predominantly urban, and restricted to dogs attending the University of Edinburgh's small animal clinic. In the present study, the dogs sampled were selected from veterinary practices throughout Great Britain, in both urban and rural areas, and therefore were more likely to be representative of the general dog population of Great Britain. The study in Edinburgh included dogs with tail lacerations, contusions, fractures, dislocations, self-trauma, neoplasia and dermatoses among the cases. However, the present study included only dogs with lacerations, contusions, fractures, dislocations, self-trauma and neoplasia as cases. Dogs with tail dermatoses were not considered as cases for the present study as there are many potential causes of this condition, such as allergies, flea infestation or even impacted anal glands. In addition, the risk estimate in the present study is based on a population of 138,212 dogs, whereas the study by Darke and others (1985) based the risk estimate on a population of 12,129 dogs.

The risk of tail injuries found in the present study indicates that tail injuries are very rare, and the approximated risk of tail injuries in working dogs was only slightly higher at 0.29 per cent. In the study by Houlton (2008), 21 of 668 (3.14 per cent) working dogs studied sustained injuries including articular pathology, fractures and muscular injuries, among which tail injuries were included. However, direct comparison of these risks cannot be made due to the differences in the populations of dogs studied: the study by Houlton (2008) focused only on working dogs but the present study included all practice-attending dogs, of which working dogs represented only a small proportion (9.1 per cent). In addition, the risk estimated by Houlton (2008) related to many different types of injury, not just tail injury.

The present study found no significant difference in risk between England, Scotland and Wales, or between urban and rural areas. This could indicate that there are no differences at all and the rate of tail injury is so low that minor policy differences between the countries have no practical consequences, or that these differences have yet to have a significant impact on the likelihood of tail injuries. This study was started approximately one year after the introduction of the new legislation, and therefore it may be too soon to detect differences in the risks of tail injury due to the differences in legislation. Dogs born after the ban on tail docking would have been at most 18 to 24 months of age at the time of the study. Additionally, the current legislation does not prevent docked or undocked dogs from being moved between countries.

The most common type of tail injury reported in the present study was lacerations and bleeding. This is similar to the findings of Houlton (2008), where tail tip injuries were the most frequently reported tail injury. It was also interesting to note that 44.3 per cent of the tail injuries were reported to be recurrent injuries. This shows an agreement with anecdotal evidence that suggests that tail injuries are very difficult to treat, often resulting in many treatment attempts before finally having to amputate the tail. In the present study, almost one-third of tail injuries requiring veterinary treatment resulted in amputation.

The risk factor analysis identified several important risk factors. English springer spaniels and cocker spaniels were both at much higher risk compared with labradors and other retrievers. This finding supports that of Houlton (2008), who found that tail injuries were much more common among these breeds than labradors or pointers. Additionally, it was found that greyhounds, lurchers and whippets were at a significantly higher risk than labradors, and also higher than English springer and cocker spaniels. It has been anecdotally reported that the high risk among greyhounds, lurchers and whippets may be due to their long, whip-like tails, which have very little hair cover for protection (Anon 2008). However, it is important to keep in mind that, despite these breeds being shown to be the highest risk groups, the overall risk of tail injuries was still low.

**TABLE 6: Results of a multivariable mixed-effects logistic regression model of risk factors associated with tail injuries in dogs in Great Britain (the number of observations used in the final model was 309 out of 319)**

Variable category	Number of cases	Number of controls	$\beta$ (se)	Odds ratio	95% CI	P
<b>Breed</b>						
Labradors and other retrievers	19	37		1.00		
English springer spaniels	16	16	1.786 (0.655)	5.97	1.65-21.52	0.006
Cocker spaniels	4	5	1.558 (0.989)	4.75	0.68-33.03	0.115
Border collies/rough collies	6	32	-0.753 (0.546)	0.47	0.16-1.37	0.168
Jack Russell terriers	1	15	-1.492 (1.096)	0.22	0.03-1.93	0.173
Greyhounds, lurchers, whippets	16	6	1.924 (0.604)	6.85	2.10-22.39	0.001
Other breeds	33	103	-0.152 (0.365)	0.86	0.42-1.76	0.677
Missing	2	8				
<b>Tail docked before injury</b>						
No	93	181		1.00		
Yes	2	33	-3.467 (0.913)	0.03	0.01-0.19	<0.001
<b>Tail wag angle</b>						
Narrow	10	61		1.00		
Moderately wide	28	62	1.066 (0.464)	2.91	1.17-7.21	0.021
Very wide	57	91	1.315 (0.433)	3.72	1.59-8.70	0.002
<b>Dog kept in kennels (during night, day or both)</b>						
No	78	201		1		
Yes	17	13	1.281 (0.508)	3.60	1.33-9.75	0.012
<b>Work use*</b>						
No	84	197		1		
Yes	11	17	-0.339 (0.656)	0.71	0.20-2.58	0.605
Intercept	-	-	-1.906 (0.493)	-	-	-
Random effect of practice identity ( $\rho$ )	-	-	0.009 (0.013)	-	-	0.350

\* Forced into model due to a priori interest in working dogs  
CI Confidence interval

**TABLE 7: Results of multivariable mixed-effects logistic regression model of risk factors associated with tail injuries in spaniels in Great Britain (the number of observation used in the final model was 41)**

Variable category	Number of cases	Number of controls	$\beta$ (se)	Odds ratio	95% CI	P
<b>Tail docked before injury</b>						
No	19	4		1		
Yes	1	17	-4.885 (1.390)	0.008	0.0004-0.12	<0.001
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	14	8		1		
Female	6	13	-2.108 (1.214)	0.121	0.01-1.31	0.082
<b>Work use*</b>						
No	15	13		1		
Yes	5	8	-0.068 (1.144)	0.934	0.10-8.81	0.953
Intercept	-	-	2.758 (1.073)	-	-	-
Random effect of practice identity ( $\rho$ )	-	-	0.012 (0.030)	-	-	0.426

\* Forced into model due to a priori interest in working dogs  
CI Confidence interval

that breed was masking the effect of work. However, in the model examining only spaniels, work was still non-significant. The present study had only low power to evaluate work as a risk factor based on the prestudy power calculations (8 per cent of the control population were working dogs), and further work on working dogs may be merited.

The present study suggests that dogs that are docked are less likely to sustain a tail injury. This supports the findings of the study conducted by Houlton (2008), which showed that there was a strong association between tail injuries and undocked English springer and cocker spaniels. In contrast, Darke and others (1985) found no significant association. The difference in findings from the latter study may have been related to that study assessing the customary/traditional docking status of breeds and not the actual docking status of individual dogs, the predominately urban clientele, the lack of adjustment for confounding factors, and the small sample size. In the present study, the results of the additional models for spaniels only and for working dogs only also showed tail docking to be an important factor in reducing the likelihood of a dog sustaining a tail injury. This is to be expected, as if a dog does not have a tail, it has no tail to injure, or if it has a tail of reduced length, it is less likely to injure the shorter tail. The important factor to examine is the level of protection that docking provides and how much more likely an undocked dog is to sustain a tail injury. The population attributable risk fraction estimate indicates, assuming a causal association, that tail docking in the dog population studied is responsible for a 12 per cent reduction in tail injuries, which could be considered to be a large and notable decrease. However, in absolute terms, the attributable risk was small at 0.20 per cent, and the number of dogs that would need to be treated (docked) in order to prevent one tail injury was very large, at 500 dogs. Additionally, when considering these results, due to the low number of docked dogs among the cases, extrapolation

of the results to the general dog population in Great Britain should be interpreted cautiously. One of the factors of interest at the start of the study was the length of the dog's tail, and not just whether or not it had been docked. Some breeds of dog have their tails docked to two-thirds the normal length (for example, Weimaraner, Hungarian vizsla), others to half the length (for example, miniature poodle), and other breeds have most of the tail removed (for example, rottweiler, Welsh corgi). Unfortunately, due to the small number of docked dogs among the cases, it was not possible to categorise dogs into different docking lengths in this study.

Factors such as height, weight, body length, coat type and tail hair were found to be significant factors on univariable analysis. However, these factors could not be included in the final model because they were highly collinear with breed. In the final model, tail wag angle was found to be a risk factor, with dogs that reportedly wagged their tails over a very wide angle being at greater risk. This intuitively makes sense, as the wider a dog wags its tail, the more likely it is to knock the tail against objects in its surroundings compared with dogs that wag their tails in a narrow angle; in addition, the force with which dogs wag their tails may be greater over a wide angle. A dog being kept in kennels was found to be an important risk factor for a tail injury. This could possibly be due to the size of the kennels being too small in relation to the size of the dogs, thereby increasing the chances of the dog knocking its tail against the kennel wall. It could also be closely linked to working dogs (58.6 per cent of working dogs lived in kennels, while only 5.2 per cent of non-working dogs lived in kennels). However, the variable 'work' was found to be non-significant regardless of whether the kennel variable was included in the model. This suggests that work itself was not a major risk factor after adjusting for other major factors. 'Work' was highly collinear with breed, and it could be argued

Tail docking remains a controversial issue, as evidenced by recent correspondence (Davidson 2006, King 2007, Penny 2007) and the number of submissions received by Parliament in the drafting of the Animal Welfare Bill (Defra 2002). The debate is centred on whether non-therapeutic tail docking reduces the risk of tail injuries sufficiently to justify the ethical concerns regarding this prophylactic intervention (Bower and Anderson 1992, Morton 1992, Bennett and Perini 2003). A study conducted in Sweden reported that, after a tail docking ban was put in place, the incidence of tail injuries in German shorthaired pointers had increased (Strejffert 1992). However, that study also had several weaknesses: it followed a limited number of litters (53), did not



make comparisons between docked and undocked dogs, did not compare animals before and after the ban, and did not make any statistical comparisons to support the conclusions. Therefore, conclusions based on the study should be examined cautiously.

It is important to be aware of the limitations of the present study. Due to the random sampling and selection of veterinary practices, only a small number of working dogs were included in the study. This could potentially decrease the chance of finding any significant association between work and tail injuries. Additionally, many of the variables in this dataset were highly collinear, forcing decisions to be made as to which variables to include and which to exclude from the final model. This, too, may have resulted in the presence of residual confounding, thereby weakening any associations or potentially masking others. One of the potential biases could be the representativeness of the sample selected. The numbers of veterinary practices selected in each region were not sampled by probability proportional to size. This is because there is a very high proportion of practices in England, such that if this approach had been used, almost no practices would have been selected in Wales and Scotland, making it impossible to estimate the risk of tail injuries in these regions with any confidence. Additionally, only practices using specific software packages were included in the study, and it could be argued that this makes the sample unrepresentative of the general population of dogs in Great Britain. However, the cooperation of some of the biggest software companies was obtained and seven different practice management systems were included. As mentioned previously, the sample may be unrepresentative because not all injuries would have been seen by a veterinarian. This bias was also highlighted by Houlton (2008). Some dogs that had sustained a tail injury may not have been examined by a veterinarian. It is likely that the present study was biased towards evaluation of major injuries, as more minor injuries may be less likely to be examined and/or treated by a veterinarian. Five control dogs had to be excluded because they had sustained a tail injury in the previous 12-month period but not been seen by a veterinarian. This may indicate that the prevalence of all tail injuries could be higher than estimated in this study; however, these injuries were likely to be less severe, as they had not been seen by a veterinarian, and therefore less likely to raise welfare concerns. Additionally, the number of untreated injuries among the controls was based on a relatively small sample (five of 227 controls, 2.20 per cent) and the likely range in the true value would be great (95 per cent CI 0.94 to 5.35 per cent).

The response rate of practices was low, and the average response rate of dog owners (cases and controls) was 35 per cent. This may be due to the controversial nature of tail docking, with some people unwilling to participate. Comparison of a number of key characteristics available suggested that responders were representative of the target population.

This study is the largest study to date and the first study to assess the risk of tail injury and risk factors for dogs from all parts of Great Britain allowing objective assessment of the frequency of injuries and risk factors associated with them. The present study has suggested that the overall risk of tail injuries is low, although specific breeds including spaniels, greyhounds and lurchers were at substantially higher odds of injury. The final multivariable risk factor model showed that being a working dog was not a major risk factor for tail injury, and other factors, including breed characteristics and levels of activity of dogs, were more important than work itself in the practice-attending population. Docking appeared to have a protective effect against injury, as expected; however, it was calculated that 500 dogs would need to be docked in order to prevent one tail injury. Further studies focusing on what appear to be the highest-risk groups of dogs would be valuable.

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## Risk factors for tail injuries in dogs in Great Britain

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## *Welfare Implications of Ear Cropping-Dogs*

(December 10, 2008)

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### THE ISSUE

Some breeds of dogs in the United States customarily have their ears reduced with a blade or scissors to modify their shape and, in some cases, allow a naturally drooping ear to stand upright. Cropping is performed when dogs are between 6 and 12 weeks old depending on breed and body condition. In larger breeds, after surgery the ears are positioned with tape, bandages or other devices to encourage an upright position.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Well-controlled studies addressing the animal welfare implications of cropping dogs' ears do not exist. However case studies support certain risks associated with the procedure.

### WELFARE CONCERNS—RISKS

**General anesthetic**—Cropping should always be carried out under full anesthesia, which itself has associated risks.

**Postoperative Care**—Dogs will experience some discomfort during healing, stretching, re-taping and bandaging, and other manipulations after surgery. Some will need their ears bandaged or taped upright for days to months and they may be isolated from other dogs during this period.

**Potential Complications**—As for any incision, cropped ears may become infected. Cropped ears may also fail to stand or have a distorted shape or position potentially leading to subsequent operations.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

### REASONS GIVEN FOR THE PRACTICE

**Animal Benefits**—It has been suggested that dogs with cropped ears are less likely to suffer from infections of the ear canal. Although the development of some serious infections has been linked to the presence of a heavy hanging ear<sup>5</sup>, there is no evidence that cropping prevents or successfully treats these conditions. It has also been suggested that cropping avoids later ear injury<sup>8</sup> or improves hearing, but no evidence is available to substantiate these claims either.

**Human Benefits**—Ear cropping produces an alert expression in dogs used for security or guard work and may contribute to the distinctive appearance of a pedigree breed.<sup>9</sup>

### LEGISLATION AND ACCEPTABILITY

The American Kennel Club supports owners who choose to crop: “...*ear cropping, tail docking, and dewclaw removal, as described in certain breed standards, are acceptable practices integral to defining and preserving breed character and/or enhancing good health.*”<sup>17</sup> However, dogs with cropped ears may not compete in United Kingdom Kennel Club events.<sup>18</sup>

Many veterinary organizations, in addition to the AVMA, oppose cosmetic cropping including the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)<sup>11</sup> and Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). Individual veterinarians differ in their perspectives (e.g., letters<sup>8,14,15,16</sup>).

Cropping has been deemed unacceptable in the United Kingdom for more than a century<sup>10</sup> and is currently prohibited in Australasia and most European and Scandinavian countries.

### SUMMARY

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division.

Ear cropping is a cosmetic procedure with potential negative outcomes for the animal.

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## Ear Cropping and Canine Otitis Externa (FAQ)

Q: Are dogs with hanging ears more likely to get ear infections?

A: Otitis externa is an infection of the ear canal that is, in most cases, able to be resolved with treatment. In a small number of cases it can become chronic and may require surgical treatment and can infrequently lead to disfigurement and fatal complications. Reports of several surveys indicate that when pedigree dogs are grouped according whether they possess pendulous or erect ears, there is a higher incidence of otitis externa in the group with pendulous ears. The difference in incidence is often in the range of 13 to 14% versus 5%.<sup>1,2</sup> Otitis externa incidence, however, is most closely associated with particular breeds within each group (whether ears are hanging or erect), and is especially prevalent in Cocker Spaniels,<sup>1,3,4</sup> Poodles,<sup>2,3,4</sup> and German Shepherd Dogs.<sup>4</sup> It has been suggested that a hanging ear increases humidity and so may promote the development of infection originating from a skin disorder or irritant.<sup>5</sup>

Q: Why do long-eared breeds have higher rates of ear infection?

A: Breeds such as Cocker Spaniels seem to be predisposed to otitis externa due to a greater density of apocrine glands and a predisposition to proliferative ceruminous gland hyperplasia (i.e., proliferation of cells) and ectasia (i.e., dilation or distension).<sup>6</sup> This clustering of risk factors suggests the risk of otitis externa in pedigreed dogs must be considered on a breed-by-breed basis, and that grouping study samples by ear shape (as described in the answer to the question above) may not be justified. Ear and eye abnormalities are commonly linked to traits that may be selected for in a breed, such as an all or partially white, merle or spotted coat.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, although it is widely believed that pendulous ears increase the risk of otitis externa, there is a lack of unconfounded evidence establishing and quantifying the strength of this link.

A comparison might be drawn to studies showing higher incidence of incontinence in docked breeds.<sup>8</sup> Although there appears to be a correlation, it cannot be assumed that tail docking is the cause of incontinence because traditionally docked breeds have other confounding predisposing characteristics (e.g., larger overall body size). To demonstrate that hanging ears are a significant risk factor (in general and by breed), and that this risk is significantly reduced or eliminated by cropping, otherwise similar dogs having cropped and uncropped ears would need to be compared. It should also be noted that some people believe ear cropping itself is harmful in exposing the ear



canal to water and irritants, potentially leading to deafness,<sup>9</sup> however this belief may stem from a coincidental combination of a cropping tradition and a congenital defect in a breed.<sup>10</sup>

Q: What should be done for dogs at increased risk of ear infection?

A: No group deems high incidence of otitis externa a valid reason for advocating routine cropping of the ears of Cocker Spaniels or Poodles.<sup>11,12</sup> Some breeds, such as the Dalmatian<sup>9</sup> and the Anatolian Shepherd Dog<sup>13</sup> (where erect ears are an AKC disqualification<sup>14</sup>) were historically cropped, but this tradition waned without apparent ill effects. Nor are traditionally cropped breeds among those with the highest incidence of otitis externa, even in countries where cropping is rare. Thus it cannot be assumed that ear cropping has a medical purpose unless this is in some way demonstrated. Other traits known to predispose a dog to ear/hearing problems and other defects are not discouraged by breed standards adopted in the United States (e.g., blue eyes in Dalmatians<sup>15</sup>) and may even be encouraged (e.g., white markings in Boxers).

Current veterinary opinion appears to be that ear conformation affects ventilation and may be a factor contributing to otitis externa incidence and severity. However, most dogs with hanging ears will not suffer from infections,<sup>16</sup> and ear conformation is not considered to be a primary cause. The basis for this opinion includes the low incidence of otitis externa in many breeds with pendulous ears (e.g., Beagles, Setters<sup>6</sup>) and the presence of other directly causal factors in otitis-prone breeds.

It has also been suggested there is no single primary cause of otitis externa and that risk factors vary substantially by breed.<sup>6</sup> In the future, it may be demonstrated that certain breeds benefit from prophylactic treatment; however this recommendation is unlikely to generalize to all breeds. Furthermore, the surgery commonly performed to avoid (re)occurrence of otitis externa aims to open the ear canal rather than reduce the pinna. In all of the scientific papers we reviewed the authors' recommendation was that at-risk dogs should be monitored and treated proactively in a way that addressed the primary cause—none of these papers identified ear conformation as the primary cause.

Q: What if ear cropping is not being done for health reasons?

A: There has been long-standing opposition to ear cropping for the purpose of altering appearance. For example the ASPCA requested removal of cropped ears from American Kennel Club breed standards in 1895,<sup>17</sup> and a similar recommendation first appeared in AVMA policy in 1976. AVMA currently opposes ear cropping when done

for cosmetic purposes,<sup>18</sup> as do several other national veterinary associations (e.g., Canada,<sup>19</sup> United Kingdom<sup>20</sup>).

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## Letters to the Editor

### More on ear cropping and neutering

I read with interest the controversy generated comparing ear crops and spays (*JAVMA*, Dec 1, 1999, pp 1581–1583). Since 20 years of practice has made me more of a realist than idealist, I thought I would offer some alternative viewpoints.

The principle behind the Veterinarian's Oath is first and foremost "the benefit of society," through protection of animal health and "relief of animal suffering." Note the wording is not "elimination of animal suffering."

Societal benefit will always take preference over animal benefit. Consequently, the profession supports livestock slaughter so people can eat and helps ranchers raise animals for clothing and pleasure. The AVMA also supports animal research, although here again animals do suffer.

Except for a few radical activists in the profession, most veterinarians recognize our obligation to help society with such activities, while at the same time ensuring as humane a treatment of animals as society will allow. Like it or not, ear cropping has a tremendous economic benefit to society, often helping veterinarians pay employees as well as the rent. At the same time, breeders and the breed-related economy make a profit selling dogs that are more distinctive.

Cropping often makes a clear distinction among breeds, which translates into economic incentive. Society is not only willing to pay for that distinction, it currently insists on it.

Please understand, I hate ear cropping. It is a technically unchallenging chore that if done well will create little if any favorable commentary. But crop one ear a little shorter or thinner, however, and the dog becomes a walking billboard advertising the "guy who butchered that poor dog's ears."

Also, I don't like the fact that surgery is performed right when the dog is developing immunity. The procedure does bring satisfied clients back, however, while refusal has been proven to lose them.

Properly performed, it is a sterile procedure with anesthesia, post-operative monitoring, and analgesia. Certainly this is less painful than what many animals go through when castrated, especially livestock.

In his argument, Dr. Plotnick mentions unnecessary surgery on "sentient" creatures, the current spin word popularized on "Star Trek: The Next Generation." Unfortunately, I'm not sure whether the doctor refers to the medical dictionary definition of sentient as "having feelings," which would include every living thing, or the popular interpretation of "recognition of self."

Before our profession insisted on so much regulation and mandated neutering, the average family could always afford a purebred—and we extolled their virtues. Now, by the time the owner arrives at the practice they have spent so much to purchase a purebred they can't afford proper veterinary care, and animals that arrive from the shelter are already vaccinated, dewormed, and neutered, leaving little for the profession. Truth is, overpopulation isn't the biggest killer of small animals, it is society's preference for purebreds over mixed breeds, and that isn't going to change any time in the foreseeable future.

I suggest we remain a little less politically active and wait for society to change its views. Until then,

we should do the best we can for the client's pet whenever they allow us to do so.

Ronald W. Stone, DVM  
Miami, Fla

As I was reading the responses to Dr. Richard H. McCormick's Oct 1, 1999 letter (*JAVMA*, p 926) and his subsequent reply in the Dec 1, 1999 issue (p 1582), I found myself compelled to comment. As veterinarians, we are trained in medical and surgical technique as well as diagnostic and therapeutic strategy. As human beings, we are entitled to our own opinions and interpretations of what we choose to do with those skills, as long as they fall within acceptable ethical guidelines. I respect Dr. McCormick's right to his opinion but felt that I should voice mine as well.

I am one veterinarian in a 7-doctor, mixed-animal practice. Each of us has our opinions, varied styles, and knowledge to contribute for the betterment of the practice. My area of skill is in small animal medicine. We are in a rural county in central Kansas with no access to a humane society; thus, our hospital is the holding facility for the county's stray, unwanted, unclaimed, and abused animals. It is heartbreaking to witness the hundreds of animals that come through our doors annually. In many instances we are able to reunite a lost animal with its owner or find a home for a stray. It is a sad reality, however, that we euthanize hundreds of healthy, adoptable animals each year. This is an

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Letters containing defamatory, libelous, or malicious statements will not be published, nor will letters representing attacks on or attempts to demean veterinary societies, their committees or agencies, or persons serving on such committees or agencies. Viewpoints expressed in published letters are those of the letter writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the AVMA.

emotional hardship on all of us, especially my staff who put countless hours in trying to place these animals to save them from a death sentence.

I don't profess to know what these animals are thinking or wanting from their lives—except maybe just the chance to live. The primary problem in our rural area is too many animals that are not spayed or neutered and not enough people with the financial means to save another dog or cat.

I think that, as humans beings, we have strong opinions and emotions about what is right and wrong and project those opinions to everything around us. I will not even touch the issue of ears and tails—because I have my opinion, and sharing it won't make a bit of difference in the life of a dog or cat. My opinion on spaying and neutering, however, can make a tremendous difference in my community. By strongly advising my clients to have their dogs and cats spayed or neutered at an early age, I may prevent the euthanasia of an entire litter (or more) of kittens or puppies that are unwanted.

Any veterinarian who has had to look into the eyes of a struggling, healthy young adult dog that tries to lick your face while you are injecting a lethal dose of barbiturate knows that population control is a real issue. Dr. McCormick indicates that he has heard of instances where humane societies have no puppies for adoption. I challenge him to take a head count of all the healthy adult animals that are available in those same facilities. Puppies are easy to place, because they are cute. Population control is not just about puppies, it is about the adult dogs that these puppies become.

*Roberta K. Lillich, DVM  
Abilene, Kansas*

I don't expect *JAVMA* to keep printing responses and counterresponses to the issues raised by Drs. Richard H. McCormick and Frederick Zydeck indefinitely but on the other hand I felt I couldn't keep silent after reading "Dr. McCormick responds" (*JAVMA*, Dec 1, 1999, p 1582).

As a volunteer with various humane groups, I have neutered many homeless kittens and puppies with results I consider consistent with the veterinarian's oath. I have also seen homeless kittens, puppies, dogs, and cats that have been truly mutilated, either intentionally or by neglect. Surgical sterilization is not a "good idea that has gone terribly wrong." In a perfect world, it would not be necessary to be so aggressive about neutering every possible animal, but as even Dr. McCormick must agree, this is not a perfect world.

Dr. McCormick states that surgical neutering "destroys an animal's primary reason for existing." I'm not sure whether he is saying that the animal itself feels worthless in its sterile state, or if he feels the animal has no value if it's neutered. In either case, I would disagree. I currently share my life with 6 adopted dogs and 4 adopted cats. They are all surgically sterilized. They don't act like animals that have had their primary reason for living taken from them. In fact, they seem to be enjoying life a great deal, and they are highly valued by myself and their many other human friends.

Dr. McCormick will probably never change his views, but I can still hope that his views are in the minority. It is in this hope that I write this letter, as evidence that at least some of us in the profession feel differently.

*Barbara Corson, RN, VMD  
Fawn Grove, Pa*

#### **Dr. McCormick responds:**

I have performed in excess of 10,000 ovariectomies and orchiectomies. With the exception of pyometras and testicular tumors, I never deceived myself into believing I was doing the animal a favor.

Veterinarians spay and neuter dogs because they have the power to do so. The animal is helpless to prevent the invasion of its body. This is the philosophy the world adheres to; domination of the weak by the strong. We have convinced ourselves, in our own self-righteousness, that the end justifies the means. If there are no puppies available, we will force the adoption of mature dogs, even when the

prospective owner wants a puppy. After all, we know best don't we?

Surgery for the convenience of the owner, in the case of spays, or to alter the animal's appearance is a very straightforward proposition. To cloud the issue is to deny the realities of the marketplace. If cosmetic surgery was to be outlawed, does anyone really believe that the pet shops and grooming parlors would hesitate to offer this service? By the same token, if responsible dog owners choose not to have their dogs spayed or neutered or, for that matter, choose not to have their dog's ears trimmed, they should be able to do so without being stigmatized or otherwise suffer any penalty for making this choice.

*Richard H. McCormick, DVM  
Miami, Fla*

#### **Setting the standards for internship programs**

The American Association of Veterinary Clinicians (AAVC) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised by Dr. Etienne Coté in his recent letter (*JAVMA*, Dec 1, 1999, p 1584). The delay in responding was the result of my efforts to consult with our executive committee for their input regarding my response.

Dr. Coté raises serious concerns that are important to the AAVC and all clinical educators. The issue of internship standards has been discussed informally amongst AAVC members for some time. In 1998, the AAVC established an ad hoc committee to survey academic clinical programs regarding the essential elements of their internship programs. To further expand the discussion and to gather input from a broader audience of interested clinicians and practitioners, the AAVC held an educational forum on clinical internships at the 1999 annual meetings of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (Chicago) and the American College of Veterinary Surgeons (San Francisco). Although there is a broad range of opinions on the specific standards for internship programs, there is general agreement on a subset of core rudiments that we believe may form the basis of guidelines for internships that we

would publish in the AAVC Intern-Resident Matching Program Directory. We believe it will be important that any forthcoming guidelines be clear, sensible, and appropriate for general clinical internships. We hope that all participating programs would consider those guidelines and strive to meet or exceed them in the development and delivery of their training programs.

It is important to appreciate that the matching program was created to serve solely as a source of announcements for available training positions and to provide a centralized matching system that is equitable for candidates and clinical programs. This source of listings, application, and acceptance has undergone refinements and improvement throughout its existence and evolved into a highly successful and efficient program.

Participation in the matching program by clinics and institutions has always been voluntary, and it would follow that adherence to the advertised guidelines would be voluntary as well. As an association dedicated to promoting postgraduate clinical education, the AAVC does not regulate or certify those institutions or clinics that participate in the matching program. This important fact is stated clearly in the matching program directory to underscore the need for personal assessment of programs and their track records by perspective candidates. The AAVC has neither the resources nor the authority to inspect or certify clinical internship programs.

The AAVC encourages every applicant to thoroughly review the programs they are considering. Applicants should consider contacting the program director for clarification or assurances regarding the training program. Applicants may wish to contact previous program interns when evaluating the merits of various positions. The AAVC believes that programs and candidates are well served when both parties have a clear understanding of what is provided and what is expected.

The AAVC believes that intern-

ships in clinical and academic practice environments are valuable learning experiences, and we encourage every candidate to approach their selection with an awareness of the program's strengths and record of success. The AAVC is dedicated to continuing its efforts to improve the matching program by developing general internship guidelines.

*Richard M. DeBowes, DVM, MS, DACVS  
President, AAVC  
Manhattan, Kan*

### **Research collaborations on rinderpest**

Dr. Walter Plowright very rightly deserves the prestigious honor as 1999 World Food Prize Laureate for his early 1950s research and development of a tissue culture vaccine (*JAVMA*, Dec 1, 1999, pp 1567, 1576). However, it might be noted that the actual work on tissue culture and other widely used vaccines began in the United States and Canada during the early 1940s as well as in Japan.<sup>1</sup> Some of these early vaccines were successfully and economically used in Asia in the late 1940s as a result of J. Nakamura and R. Reisinger's research.

It might be well to note that many of the vaccines, including those used prior to the development of tissue culture technology, induced a lifetime immunity in cattle. Research by R. Daubney in Egypt and R. A. Alexander in South Africa corroborate this.

In the case of rinderpest in cattle, as in the cases of smallpox and poliomyelitis in humans, an endless chain of research has resulted in the almost complete elimination of these highly pathogenic diseases.

Thus, the research of Edward Jenner, Theobald Smith, Jonas Salk, and others reinforces the concept that perpetual explorations lead to concrete solutions to serious problems.

*Nels Konnerup, DVM  
Camano Island, Wash*

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# Ear-Cropping and Tail-Docking

*www.peta.org*

Humans can opt out of cosmetic surgery, but dogs aren't so lucky. We choose for them—and we often choose painful, unnecessary procedures such as ear-cropping and tail-docking. To give certain breeds so-called "desirable" traits, unscrupulous veterinarians perform cruel, disfiguring surgeries that cause dogs great suffering.

Dogs usually have their ears cropped when they are just 8 to 12 weeks old. At this stage in their development, the trauma of the procedure can have a strong psychological impact on the maturing pup. The process of taping and retaping a pup's ears to force them to stand erect after they have been cropped can be agonizing for the dog.

Puppies are normally just a few days old when their tails are docked. They are generally not even given anesthetics to numb the pain. Compassionate veterinarians object to the arbitrary removal of body parts used for communication, balance, and expression. Dogs "talk" to their human companions and other dogs using their ears and tails.

Performing medically unnecessary procedures that simply perpetuate the image of dogs as fashion accessories is outrageous. This image is promoted by the American Kennel Club at its canine beauty pageants and by breeders who believe that "their" breed will be "ruined" if it does not maintain the image handed down by parent breed clubs decades ago.

These procedures are so cruel that they are banned in many European countries. For example, British kennel clubs outlawed ear-cropping a century ago, and cosmetic tail-docking was stopped in the U.K. in 1993.

Sadly, some veterinarians still see nothing wrong with mutilating a dog whose guardian is willing to pay for it. The American Veterinary Medical Association states that "ear-cropping and tail-docking are not medically indicated nor of

benefit to the patient. These procedures cause pain and distress and, as with all surgical procedures, are accompanied by inherent risks of anesthesia, blood loss, and infection. Therefore, veterinarians should counsel dog owners about these matters before agreeing to perform these surgeries."



# Letters to the Editor

## Arguments for continuation of ear cropping and tail docking

In the December 15, 2008, issue of the *JAVMA*,<sup>1</sup> I read where our representatives finally caved in and decided that ear cropping and tail docking should be eliminated. The former policy, adopted in 1999, stated that veterinarians should advise clients seeking these procedures that it exposed their pets to the risks of anesthesia, blood loss, and infection. Any surgical procedure, including spays and castrations, lipoma removals, and cosmetic surgeries, is associated with the same risks of anesthetic death, blood loss, and infection.

Now the welfare activists suggest there is little scientific evidence that the cosmetic procedures of ear cropping and tail docking convey benefits to dogs. What exactly does that mean? Did the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee do their due diligence and survey a large group of veterinarians on this subject?

Might I ask when was the last time an Animal Welfare Committee member enjoyed a dog show? Regrettably, many probably do not attend. Ear cropping and tail docking provide distinctive differences in dogs of those breeds, including a variety of appearances and personalities. Not every dog within a breed looks the same. There would be no joy in going to a dog show of Doberman Pinchers and Boxers with floppy ears and long tails.

As for scientific benefits, I believe that dogs with cropped ears have far less ear problems than floppy-eared dogs. I also found it quite amusing that Executive Board member Dr. Larry Dee said, "Leaders take risks, and there's a risk in approving this policy, but it's a risk worth taking." He also stated his observation that younger veterinarians found this procedure needlessly painful for dogs. Dr. Dee, I know of no scientific evidence that ears and tails are any more painful than that of any other part of the body.

I believe our Executive Board would better serve by staying neutral on this subject, as they have in the past. Our representatives should assist us, not harm us. When countries such as Great Britain and Canada banned certain procedures in the distant past, there were no pain medications and, most probably, the surgical amenities were not nearly as good. With the advent of pain medications and surgical suites often as good as human hospitals, there is no reason these procedures should not continue to be offered.

Roger Gussett, DVM  
Toledo, Ohio

1. Nolen RS. AVMA opposes cosmetic ear cropping, tail docking of dogs. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2008;233:1811.

## Dr. Dee responds:

I am familiar with Dr. Gussett's comments because I heard them in 1999 when the House of Delegates approved the previous policy on ear trimming. Reduced ear infections, fewer tail injuries, and the excuse that laypeople will crop ears and dock tails if we don't are all cited as reasons to continue these cosmetic procedures. Most of these arguments are specious. We trim ears and dock tails because we always have. We do it because we "like the way they look." If we want to prevent ear infections, we should be cropping the ears on Cocker Spaniels.

Change is uncomfortable. When I was a student 40 years ago,

there was an understanding, especially in large animal medicine, that to be a successful practitioner, one had to make a profit for the producer. If the cow was worth less than the treatment, she went to slaughter. Even though we discussed animal welfare, we still performed multiple survival surgeries in the surgery laboratory with minimal perioperative pain management.

As the dog has gone from the yard to the porch to the kitchen to the bedroom to the bed to becoming a child substitute, we are encouraged to be the animal advocate. The profession struggles with this split personality—to be the animal advocate while assisting industry to be profitable. This is particularly difficult when animal welfare changes may decrease the profitability of vertically integrated food animal production, resulting in higher food prices for the consumer.

Our concern is that we might offend those who "have always done it this way." I share that concern. My uncle (Iowa State '39) trimmed ears until he retired. My father (Iowa State '39) trimmed ears until he retired. My brother (Auburn '72) trims ears—and does a great job! We are not talking about quality, technique, or pain relief; we are talking about the scientific rationale for the procedures.

One of the AVMA's five strategic goals states that the "AVMA is a leading advocate for, and an au-

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thoritative, science-based resource on animal welfare.” Basically, animal welfare is an important societal issue, and the veterinary profession needs to be at the table. We have to demonstrate what we have always said: that veterinarians are the most knowledgeable, scientific resource on animal welfare issues. The challenge for the AVMA is that it represents a very diverse profession, with wide-ranging views on animal welfare. While we respect and try to assist all members of the association, we also have to lead. Leading entails risk, including the risk of offending a member and, in this instance, the risk of being branded as some radical animal welfarist, animal rightist, PETA lover, for example.

I appreciate and empathize with Dr. Gussett’s concerns. This policy change was made to substantiate the concepts that veterinarians should be the voice of animal welfare, that we are science-based, and that it is the right thing to do.

*Larry G. Dee, DVM, DABVP  
AVMA Executive Board, District IV  
Hollywood, Fla*

#### **Dr. Reynolds responds:**

I am pleased to provide Dr. Gussett with additional information regarding the deliberations of the Animal Welfare Committee that led to its recommendation for modifications to the policy on ear cropping and tail docking of dogs. The revised policy more clearly conveys AVMA opposition to cropping dogs’ ears and docking their tails for cosmetic purposes, but is entirely consistent with previous policy on this issue.<sup>1</sup>

This policy was not revised at the behest of activists, as Dr. Gussett suggests. Rather, an examination of the policy was completed in accord with an Executive Board–established directive that all AVMA policies be reviewed at least once every five years. The committee’s review included a comprehensive search of the scientific literature (peer-reviewed and non–peer-reviewed), consideration of the historical and cultural bases for the procedures, and a search for survey data about the experiences of practicing veterinarians. The results of this extensive review have

been made available for AVMA members and others in the form of backgrounders<sup>2,3</sup> and answers to frequently asked questions<sup>4,5</sup> on the AVMA Web site.

The revised policy applies to procedures performed for cosmetic purposes. By limiting it in this fashion, the committee attempted to ensure that these procedures could be performed when the need for them could be substantiated (ie, therapeutic or preventive purposes). That being said, consider the following:

- There is little scientific evidence that ear cropping effectively prevents otitis externa. Many factors contribute to this condition, including the shape of the ear, the shape and length of the horizontal canal, and environmental conditions. The ears of some breeds that are particularly prone to otitis externa (eg, Cocker Spaniels and Labrador Retrievers) are not cropped.
- There is no scientific evidence that ear cropping improves dogs’ hearing.
- Ear cropping may result in an alert expression in dogs used for security, guard, or military purposes; however, many breeds used for such functions do not have cropped ears or docked tails (eg, Belgian Malinois, German Shepherd Dogs, Golden Retrievers, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, and Beagles).
- Limited information is available on the incidence of tail injury in dogs, but studies that are available suggest the incidence is low, particularly for dogs whose primary function is as a pet.
- Injuries associated with heavy brush encountered during hunting are often used to justify tail docking; however, the tails of many breeds traditionally used for hunting are not docked.

I appreciate Dr. Gussett’s desire that revisions to AVMA policy be considered carefully and that AVMA entities suggesting those revisions complete the appropriate review before making their recommendations. By perusing the related

material available on the AVMA Web site, AVMA members can see that the Animal Welfare Committee has met its obligation in this regard. I disagree, however, that there is no joy in going to shows where dogs are allowed to exhibit the natural conformations of their ears and tails. If good breeding brings out the essence of the dog, shouldn’t that essence include its normal body parts (at least when removal of those parts does not benefit the dog in some way)?

*James P. Reynolds, DVM  
Chair, Animal Welfare Committee  
Visalia, Calif*

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2. AVMA. Welfare implications of dogs: ear cropping (December 17, 2008). Available at: [www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/dogs\\_ear\\_cropping\\_bgnd.pdf](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/dogs_ear_cropping_bgnd.pdf). Accessed Feb 2, 2009.
3. AVMA. Welfare implications of dogs: tail docking (October 13, 2008). Available at: [www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/dogs\\_tail\\_docking\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/dogs_tail_docking_bgnd.asp). Accessed Feb 2, 2009.
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5. AVMA. Frequently asked questions about canine tail docking. Available at: [www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/canine\\_tail\\_docking.faq.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/canine_tail_docking.faq.asp). Accessed Feb 2, 2009.

#### **Integrating our health-care system**

A new opportunity exists in our country as an administration that is projecting change takes power in Washington. We should use this opportunity and embrace and promote the idea of integrating our health-care system. This is an idea that can really resonate at this time. The AVMA Executive Board has approved participation in the Healthiest Nation Alliance,<sup>1</sup> whose vision is to develop an integrated national system where all the participants value health and work together to achieve optimal health for all.

There is a clear path coming for the future of medicine. The idea to integrate all aspects of health care

needs to be expansive. We should do the following:

- Integrate the human and veterinary health issues.
- Integrate medicine with complementary and alternative methods for a more inclusive “gold standard.”
- Integrate the different global health-care systems to see how the best methods for delivery are achieved.
- Integrate research to encourage the collaboration of researchers to work together to reach goals.
- Integrate the environmental issues with health so that we can take the tough steps to identify the origins of the environmental sources of illness.

My practice has seen a substantial increase in the number of cases of cancer in dogs and cats. It actually overwhelms me some days. The World Health Organization projects that the cancer rate could be 50% higher in humans by 2020.<sup>2</sup> Our animals are the canaries in the coal mines. Since animals age six times faster, we as veterinarians see multiple generations of animals grow during our professional lives. Using the knowledge we gain, veterinarians need to come together and use our knowledge of multigenerational health issues to be leaders in world health. As an AVMA member for greater than 30 years, and being fortunate enough to have started the exploration of integrative veterinary medicine<sup>3</sup> in 1975, I have had

the experience of seeing the best of all treatments working together to provide the best combinations of alternatives for our patients and the families that love them.

*Margo Roman, DVM  
Main Street Animal  
Services of Hopkinton  
Hopkinton, Mass*

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2. World Health Organization. Media Centre. Available at: [www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2003/pr27/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2003/pr27/en/). Accessed Feb 2, 2009.
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## **Ear Cropping and Tail Docking, Pros and Cons**

DOG FANCY readers support alerting dog owners to ear cropping and tail docking risks.

Ear cropping and tail docking - surgeries usually performed on dogs for cosmetic reasons - have led the American Veterinary Medical Association to discourage its members from performing the operations and the controversy could have an impact in the show ring.

The American Kennel Club, the largest breed registry in the United States, specifies docking - the amputation of part of a dog's tail - in more than 40 breeds. Veterinarians generally dock puppies within a week after birth but sometimes perform the surgery on older dogs for medical reasons, such as a tail-beater's constant fractures from whipping it against hard objects.

Cropping - the surgical reshaping of a dog's ears - may be performed to correct birth defects or damage from injury or disease, but the expensive and painful surgery is typically sought on 8- to 10-week-old pups to make their folded ears erect for conformation. Recovery requires splinting, tedious ear bandaging and pain medication.

The Schaumburg, Ill.-based AVMA recommended in 1976 that the AKC and other breed associations drop cropped ears from breed standards and eventually prohibit showing dogs with cropped ears. Tail docking is

illegal in Britain, and ear cropping is considered inhumane in England and several other European countries.

As the standards endure, the AVMA has given its member veterinarians official counseling: "Ear cropping and tail docking in dogs for cosmetic reasons are not medically indicated nor of benefit to the patient. These procedures cause pain and distress, and, as with all surgical procedures, are accompanied by inherent risks of anesthesia, blood loss and infection. Therefore, veterinarians should counsel dog owners about these matters before agreeing to perform these surgeries."

The statement does not prohibit veterinarians from performing either procedure, said Gail C. Golab, Ph.D., DVM, assistant director for education and research for the AVMA. It's intended to make owners aware of the inherent risks.

The AKC, based in New York City and Raleigh, N.C., fears animal-rights activists may cite the resolution to pursue cruelty charges against owners who have their dogs cropped or docked. It responded to the AVMA's decision in a prepared statement: "The AKC recognizes that ear cropping, tail docking and dewclaw removal, as described in certain breed standards, are acceptable practices integral to defining and preserving breed character and/or enhancing good health. Appropriate veterinary care should be provided."

The Denver-based American Animal Hospital Association tops a list of veterinary associations that signed on to the resolution. "Owners should be informed," said Janice Trumpeter, DVM, an AAHA staff veterinarian. "People think they need to have this done for medical reasons. They don't."

The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights of Davis, Calif., began campaigning seven years ago for such a policy statement, said board member Holly Cheever, DVM. "We're happy to see AVMA take a more aggressive stance," she said, adding that AVAR would endorse legislation outlawing the procedures unless they're performed for medical purposes.

*DOG FANCY* asked for your opinion about the AVMA statement. We've tabulated the responses and selected many of your decisive and heart-felt comments for this report.

## **CROPPING**

### ***Agree***

- "I am the elated owner of an American Pit Bull Terrier that still has her own beautiful rosebud ears. Not for one second would I even consider chopping off a part of her body. My stepdaughter works for a veterinarian and told me pathetic stories of puppies whimpering in cages, waiting to heal from this gross mutilation. I believe it would be a very good practice to inform clients about the pain and the danger. Knowledge is power."
- "I think breed registries should disqualify cropped ears as they have in England. I have a vet who just won't do ear cropping."
- "When we got our Dobie from the breeder, his tail was already docked. Initially, we were going to have his ears cropped. Everyone does it. He wouldn't be a proper Dobie without it, right? Wrong! He may not fit the perception of what a

Dobie is supposed to look like, but he's happy, healthy and the cutest Doberman you've ever seen. We couldn't find any good reason to put him through the pain of surgery and the discomfort of having his ears taped up all that time."

- "My husband has a bad memory of having his Doberman's ears cropped. The dog bled really badly. I agree with the counseling. Our Boxers have their natural ears."
- "I do not believe they need cosmetic surgery. They are our companions and best friends, not our meal tickets at Westminster."
- "As a former veterinary technician, I can say it's heart-wrenching to watch healthy ears being cut off with a scalpel for a more 'pleasing' appearance. I agree owners should be counseled about the unnecessary pain that they might be causing their dog."
- "The AKC and all these other show organizations should be ashamed of themselves for promoting such a horrible thing."

### ***Disagree***

- "Veterinarians and animal welfare activists should focus their attention where there really is a problem and leave our breeds as they are and always have been. I hope the day never comes when I go to a dog show and cannot readily recognize once docked/cropped breeds."
- "Cropping is the choice of the owner. I had stitches removed today from my Great Dane puppy's ears. Our vet is top-notch and I have never had a problem. He put the dog under and gave him pain medication afterward."
- "I had an experience with one veterinarian who adamantly opposed cropping a Doberman's ears. We're not talking advice here; we're talking intimidation! I changed vets. His job is to care for my pet's health, not moralize and pass judgment."

- "There's nothing wrong with ear cropping. People have been doing this for so many years that the look has become natural and is now part of the breed. Westminster will not accept these breeds without such markings."

## **DOCKING**

### ***Agree***

- "Our Dobies have whipped us with their tails, but no matter. Of course, veterinarians should counsel owners about the pain. If owners aren't aware these procedures cause pain, they shouldn't even own dogs!"
- "Many people think it doesn't hurt the dog and that is why they have it done."
- "I'm thrilled that the AVMA has adopted this statement. I fail to understand why anyone would put their companions through unnecessary surgery for purely cosmetic reasons."
- "I have an adopted Cocker Spaniel whose tail was docked before I took her in as an adult dog. I cannot imagine putting an animal through the pain and possible complications for cosmetic reasons. These dogs are not typically used for the purposes (hunting, for example) for which the practices of cropping and docking were originated, so why put these babies through such pain?"
- "We humans can be so arrogant. We think we need to improve on God's work. I feel those dog owners and/or breeders who seek these mutilations should be charged with animal abuse."
- "After being advised by our veterinarian, we allowed Penny, our 5-month-old Cocker Spaniel, to have her tail docked when she was spayed. Not only did she suffer pain and distress but also phantom pains. For more than a week she screamed and ran in circles while trying to find her missing limb. Penny would scream in pain every time she sat or accidentally bumped her new stub. I have since told everybody who will listen about our terrible experience and strongly counsel others not to do the same."

### ***Disagree***

- "I believe that docking tails is good for working dogs and dogs with thin tails, which can be broken if they're whacked against something ."

- "Some dogs should have their tails docked when they are pups. For example, Great Danes and Irish Wolfhounds really beat up their tails, especially while being boarded. It can cause lots of trauma and infection."
- "I have had Boxer pups' tails done when they were 1 day old. I held the pups while it was done and could not discern any pain or distress. Unless it was proven that this procedure caused pain, I would continue to have my dogs' tails docked."
- "I have a Miniature Schnauzer. A friend who is a breeder told us to get the tail docked or it would be longer than the dog."
- "I think it is fine for breeds that need their tails docked like the Rottweiler. I have a 3-year-old Rottweiler myself and I think it's cute for him to have a little 'stubbed' tail."
- "You should dock tails on the breeds that are supposed to have short tails because it's done when they're a day or two old, and they don't know what's happening, and no anesthesia is given."

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PMCID: PMC2942042



# Amputación de cola y recorte de orejas

Por: Dr. Jaime Camps

Asesoría Técnica Purina

**V**erle las orejas al lobo" es una expresión que más o menos significa prevención ante algún riesgo. No he buscado en refraneros alguna expresión relativa a la cola del lobo o del perro, que debe haberlas.

Los perros, como sus antepasados los lobos, tienen orejas y cola. Tanto unas como otra en la actualidad se les recortan o se les amputa en un buen número de razas, lo que se practica en todo el mundo.

Por los movimientos sociológicos defensores de los animales (animal rights, animal welfare) que van aumentando por doquier, el tema de la amputación de la cola o del recorte de las orejas, por separado, o globalmente, será un tema a discutir y, si se me permite el símil, será un tema que "traerá cola" ... o "prevención ante un riesgo"...

## En el Reino Unido está prohibido el recorte de orejas, desde 1895

Hoy día, y es aceptado plenamente, en el Reino Unido está prohibido el recorte de orejas, desde 1895, por el Club Canino (K.C.) y aceptado tácitamente por todos los ingleses, aunque continúan con las amputaciones de colas en algunas razas, si bien a partir de este año, 1993, la asociación nacional de

Napoletano ¿hubiera ganado el título de mejor perro del mundo de haber tenido las orejas intactas?

Entre los veterinarios de EEUU y de otros países, y entre criadores, existen polémicas y discusiones sobre qué partido tomar ¡Amputaciones sí! ¡Amputaciones no!

El Consejo de Europa, en Noviembre de 1987, propuso la creación de una legislación contra el recorte de las orejas y la amputación de la cola (siempre que no sea por necesidad médico-quirúrgica), que fue aceptada por una parte de los países que forman el Consejo de Europa. Varios países, entre ellos España, no lo firmaron.

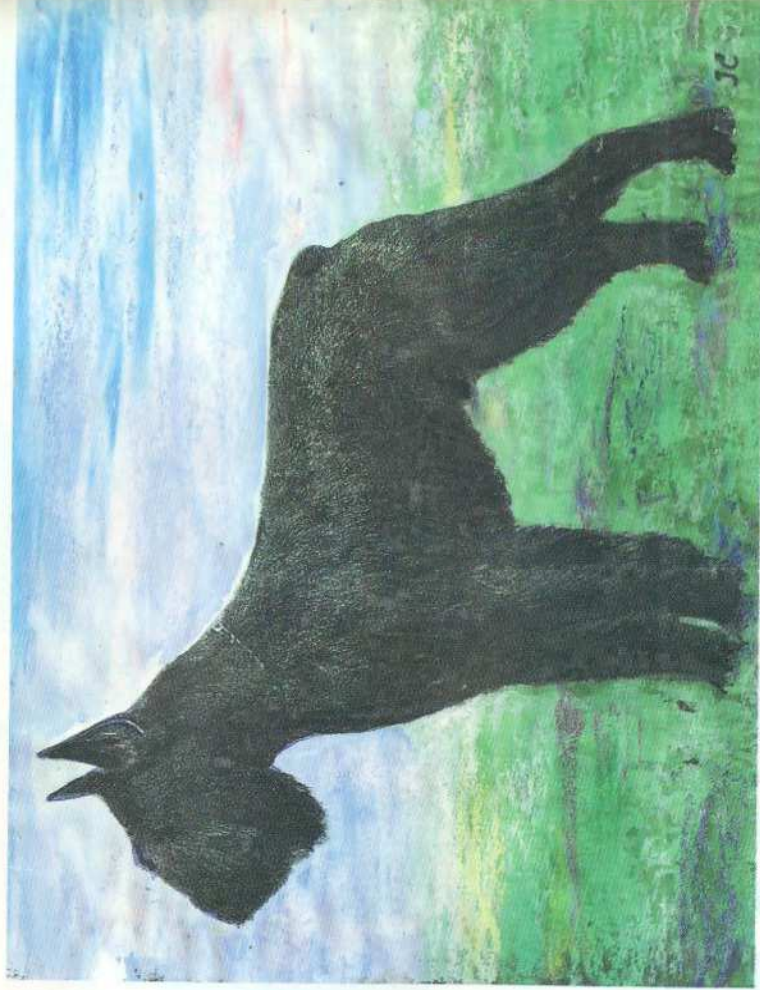
Debemos, por tanto, prepararnos para argumentar también en pro o en contra de esta ya costumbre.

Personalmente, no quiero, con escrito, tomar aún un compromiso sino sólo el alertar y prepararnos mejor para cuando venga el momento de decidir posturas.

Por supuesto no creo puedan aceptarse los apelativos de crueldad, ni de riesgos para los animales, que

veterinarios (RCVS) promulga como falta ética la práctica de esta operación. Más nos sorprende que en un país eminentemente Mediterráneo, hermano en cultura y de tradiciones latinas, como es Italia, ya hayan iniciado prohibiciones, o regulación contraria a las amputaciones, como en el caso del "Mastino Napoletano".

El famoso BIS de la Exposición Mundial 92 en Valencia, Mastino



"¿Conoce la raza de este perro?"



esgrimen algunos, ya que, en su grandísima mayoría, las orejas son recortadas por profesionales Veterinarios, con los animales bajo anestesia y con las máximas garantías de higiene y sanidad.

Aparte, las razas no se imponen y hay libertad para escoger las que no hayan sufrido la operación, si así se desea.

La amputación de la cola la llevan aún a cabo algunos criadores, pero con tendencia a que la realicen los Veterinarios, (en Inglaterra por ley desde Julio 1993, aunque no sé cómo lo solventarán si ellos, por otra parte, lo consideran falta ética...). A la tierna edad en que lo hacen, el dolor y el riesgo son mínimos.

**Aparte, las razas no se imponen y hay libertad para escoger las que no hayan sufrido la operación**

Por principio democrático no me gustan las imposiciones, y debe ser el público quien vaya a decidir, y ya decide, como puede observarse con el cambio de las razas "best sellers" influenciadas por modas.

## ANTIGÜEDAD

Aún siendo, tanto orejas como colas, partes menores del cuerpo del perro, y cuya amputación o recorte las ha unido en un mismo contexto, el origen es muy diverso, tanto por el motivo de su presencia como, y sobre todo, por su antigüedad en el Reino Animal.

La cola tiene un origen miles de veces más lejano en el tiempo que las orejas. La cola está presente en los vertebrados, incluso en los cordados primitivos, usándola en muchas especies como único medio de traslación, o el más importante (peces, reptiles, aves, etc.).

En los mamíferos, con un sistema locomotor terrestre, con patas desarticuladas, la cola fue perdiendo im-



Las orejas típicas del Pastor Alemán

portancia, hasta llegar a desaparecer en algunas especies.

La cola en el perro es importante para su movimiento global y agilidad, como se ha demostrado en estudios de biomecánica, o simplemente si los vemos cuando nadan, o cómo se sacuden el agua. Importancia real en los perros destinados a ciertos trabajos o uso, y mínima en animales de compañía.

Las orejas son mucho más recientes en la evolución de los animales, ya que se trata de aditamentos al sentido del oído, apareciendo "formalmente" en los mamíferos que, comparándolos con los cordados primitivos, podemos considerar que las

orejas aparecieron "ayer" y la cola "hace años"...

Sirven como protección del oído, lo hacen más efectivo al concentrar las ondas sonoras, incluso al captarlas mejor según su dirección, y por su movilidad, en muchas especies, incluido el perro, es un órgano que ayuda en las comunicaciones etológicas, y es casi su lenguaje.

## ¿POR QUÉ REALIZAMOS LOS CORTES?

Si la cola, como tal, en los animales, tiene un origen mucho más antiguo que las orejas, en el perro tam-



bién se inició su amputación anteriormente que los recortes de las orejas, al menos según documentos escritos o expresiones figurativas (pintura y escultura). Me refiero a cortes como norma o costumbre, ya que, con toda seguridad, existieron amputaciones prehistóricas para tratar roturas, heridas, inflamaciones, sangrías, etc.

Fue precisamente un hispano-romano quien dejó escrita una norma para cortar, o reducir, la cola a los perros de guardar ganado, o de

### En cuanto a orejas cortadas, los primeros comentarios escritos aparecen en el siglo pasado

guardar la casa, como dice su traducción al castellano. Fue el gaditano Lucio Junio Moderato Columela, hoy hace 1950 años, quien dejó escrito en sus libros "De Re Rustica" lo siguiente (transcripción según facsímil de su primera traducción de 1824): "Las colas de los cachorros convendrá castrarlas á los cuarenta dias de haber nacido, de esta manera. Hay un nervio que atraviesa por las vertebrae del espinazo y llega hasta la extremidad de la cola: éste se ase con los dientes, y sacándolo algun tanto, se corta: en haciendo esto, la cola no toma una extension desagradable en longitud..."

En cuanto a orejas cortadas, los primeros comentarios escritos aparecen en el siglo pasado, y están muy relacionados con la creación de las razas actuales.

A las razas de lucha entre perros, o a las de guarda y defensa, para darles menos puntos de agarre, e incluso conferirles un aspecto más agresivo, se les recortaban ya al nacer mediante un corte rápido con un cuchillo, tal como hacen en la actualidad algunos pastores y rehateros de la España rural.

En el pasado se recortaban tanto las orejas muy colgantes, que eran las de mayor riesgo de ser mordidas,

como las semicolgantes o en roseta, e incluso las erectas, si creían que les era mejor para su función.

Por el contrario, entre los perros empleados para la caza, excepto los lebreles, fueron escogándose los de orejas más largas y colgantes, ya que existía la teoría de que con orejas que tapasen los oídos, no tendrían tan desarrollado el sentido del oído y, por tanto, desarrollarían mejor el del olfato, para seguir el rastro con más eficacia...

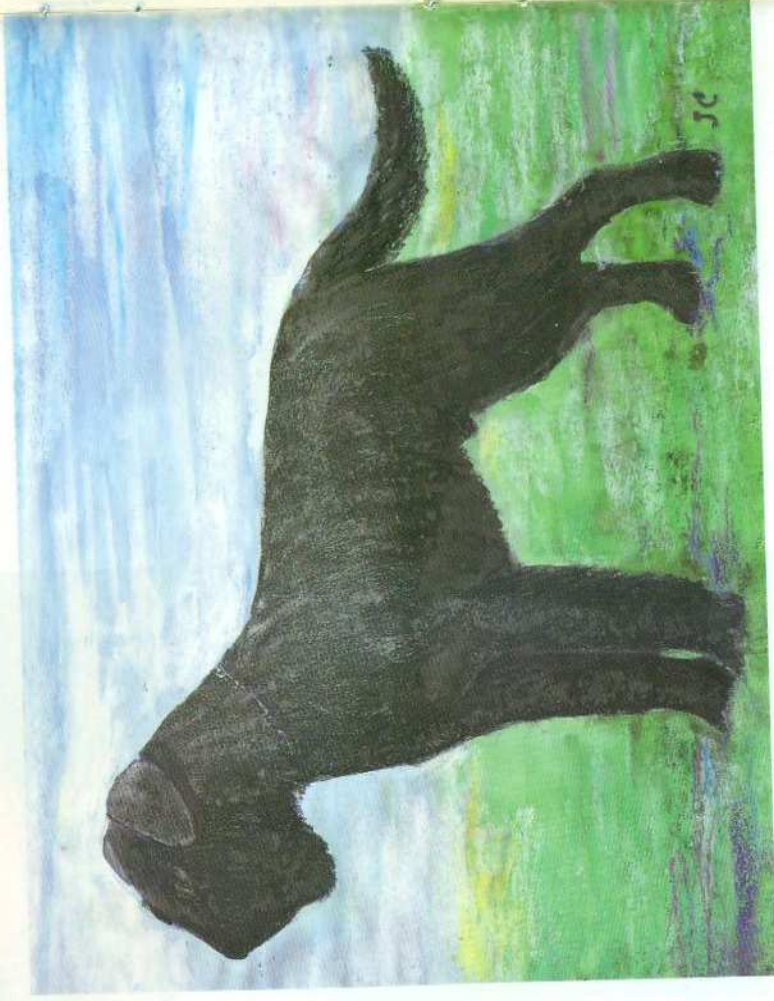
### ACTUALIDAD

Hoy tenemos casi cuatrocientas razas reconocidas por la F.C.I. (Federación Cinológica Internacional), y cada año se admiten algunas más. Varias razas, desde su creación y aceptación, incluso se cita en su estándar, figuran con las orejas recortadas, o con la cola amputada, o con ambas.

Por lo tanto no nos extrañan estas "anormalidades" anatómicas, por tenerlas ya como "normales" aún no siendo naturales.

De aquí la pequeña broma de los dibujos-acuarela de un mismo perro que ilustran estas páginas, uno con las orejas y cola intactas, y el otro con las amputaciones "normales". Corresponden a un Schnauzer mediano, y sin embargo parecen perros distintos. Simplemente coloreé unas fotocopias de una misma fotografía de un perro, conocido campeón, poniendo el color y dibujando orejas y cola, para disimular el cambio.

Siguiendo las argumentaciones de mi escrito en ANIMALIA, "Orejas Erectas, Orejas Colgantes" de hace un par de años, donde propuse que el origen de las orejas colgantes y largas en los perros, cuando las tienen erectas todos los cánidos silvestres, se debía probablemente a que en la prehistoria (todo el paleolítico superior) nuestros antepasados, al



"Mismo Schnauzer mediano de la foto primera, pero sin retocar orejas ni cola"



escoger a los cachorros de lobo, cazados antes del "imprinting", único momento factible para pensar en una domesticación, sólo mantuvieron en su hogar a los cachorros con orejas más colgantes, típico en los cachorros, así como los que conservarían más tiempo los otros símbolos juveniles (ladrar; saltar hacia el "jefe"; lamer; cabeza mayor y más esférica; "silla de montar"; agresividad menor, etc.) o sea los de mayor diferenciación del lobo.

Por el contrario, la humanidad moderna, por la connotación de protección por un lado, y por la de competencia (deportivas, y de apuestas) por otro, ha considerado que podrían ser más útiles con las orejas recortadas y la cola amputada, a la vez que se les confería un aspecto más agresivo, o una vuelta (orejas) al aspecto lobuno.

De todas formas, con la tecnología genética actual, ya aplicada con éxito en otras especies, podrían devolverse las orejas erectas a las razas en las que se decidiera llevar a cabo



Golden Retriever (orejas colgantes)

Tabla I

RAZAS DE PERROS SEGUN F.C.I.		Inglaterra	Alemania
Número de razas		53	44
% sobre número de razas:			
orejas erectas		19	16
orejas recortadas		0	20
orejas colgantes		81	64
% colgantes "visibles" sobre el total población canina		95	25

este cambio. Más complejo y duro, pero que la simple cirugía sí sería, aunque apoye la idea.

#### ■ COMPARACION INGLATERRA Y ALEMANIA

Escojo comparar las razas originarias, o de creación, en estos dos países, por ser ambos europeos y, por ende, con perros de un mismo tronco originario, y por ser ambos los de mayor número de razas inscritas en la F.C.I. Países, sin embargo, que se distinguen por una historia y una forma de educación, significativamente diferentes.

**Inglaterra** tiene inscritas 53 razas según el último censo, en las que a **ninguna** se le recortan las orejas, ni en el país, ni fuera de él. Sólo un 19% (10 razas) tiene las orejas completamente erectas, aunque son los dos Corgis, y ocho razas muy pequeñas, y posiblemente las tienen así por falta de peso o volu-



men. En número total de perros, estimado sobre censo, **más del 95% de los perros son de orejas colgantes** en U.K.

En **Alemania**, con 44 razas inscritas, se le **recortan las orejas al 20%** (9 razas), y curiosamente, aunque lógico, son todas del grupo II de la F.C.I. Se trata de las siguientes: Boxer, Dobermann, Pinscher, Zwerpinscher, Affenpinscher, Schnauzer gigante, Schnauzer mediano, Schnauzer miniatura y el Dogo Alemán.

**De todas formas, con la tecnología genética actual, ya aplicada con éxito en otras especies, podrían devolverse las orejas erectas a las razas en las que se decidiera llevar a cabo este cambio**

mán. A todas estas razas se les corta también la cola, a excepción de la última indicada.

El porcentaje de orejas erectas, naturalmente o por cirugía, es de un 36% (16 razas) pero por la importancia del Pastor Alemán, mayoritario, **al menos el 75% de los perros son de orejas erectas**, sobre el censo total.

Vemos, por estos datos, que hubo en un pasado reciente (menos de 150 años) y en la actualidad, pudiendo tomarse como resultado de su sistema educativo o político, criterios casi opuestos en estas dos naciones, con razas de gran divulgación en el resto del mundo. Son una gran mayoría del censo total.

El Pastor Alemán es el de censo más alto en Europa continental (orejas erectas). Los Retrievers el censo más alto en UK y USA (orejas colgantes).

## FUTURO

El futuro no lo puede adivinar nadie, ni hacer vaticinios al detalle, pero estimar que este tema será discutido, y ya lo es en medios de dirección cinófila, está claro a todas luces. Habrá críticos y habrá "fans".

Discutirán los de "animal welfare" y los puristas de las razas. Los veterinarios y los criadores. Correrá mucha tinta antes de llegar a acuerdos.

Posiblemente ni siquiera un organismo mundial que haga proposiciones. Es difícil que la FCI llegue a unos mismos acuerdos con la AKC (American Kennel Club) si tienen tantas diferencias en la actualidad sobre razas admitidas y estándares. Ni en los diversos países, en donde consideran hay otras prioridades.

las que actualmente se les recortan como norma las orejas y cola, cosa no demasiado grave si precisamente coinciden con razas (Dogo, Boxer, Dobermann) que ya reciben una diferenciación por colores a la hora de juzgarlos en las exposiciones.

En contra del argumento de que con las orejas recortadas y enhiestas aumentan su aspecto agresivo, hay razas conocidas como celosísimos guardianes, a las que no se les aplica la regla de aumentar la apariencia agresiva, como en el Fila Brasileiro, o en el Rottweiler (excepción alemana que confirma la regla, aunque sí se le amputa la cola), como ejemplo, entre otros.

Es cierto que la decisión de cortar o recortar orejas y cola ha sido tomada por la humanidad, lo mismo que el obtener tantísimas razas de perros. De criticar o legislar sobre las operaciones en las orejas y la cola, debería, de ser coherentes, tratarse asimismo de las exageraciones en tamaño

**La decisión de cortar o recortar orejas y cola ha sido tomada por la humanidad, lo mismo que el obtener tantísimas razas de perros**

o en anatomía, como buscar gigantismo o enanismo, prognatismos, colocación de ojos, acondroplasia, etc., que se aceptan en el estándar e incluso se tiende hacia estas "anormalidades" al señalar máximos y mínimos.

No deseo alertar sobre otros temas, más importantes si cabe, que la situación actual en cola y oreja, sólo los cito para ayudar en su valoración.

El futuro decidirá, y esperemos que sea sin llegar a imposiciones sin fundamento, ni obligando a aceptar extremismos antagonistas. De todas maneras, si se considera necesario realizar los cortes o amputaciones, que sean siempre con máximas garantías. ■

Quizás una solución intermedia, que no presenta gran diferencia con lo que se viene haciendo hoy día, podría ser la siguiente:

**Colas:** Para perros de caza (aunque requiriesen selección dirigida, así como cambios en la "expresión" de la cola al cazar), o los perros muy activos, y a los de cola con pelo largo, por la funcionalidad en unos o por la estética en otros, creo, o simplemente "me parece", no deberían cortárseles las colas. Sólo como tendencia futura.

A los otros perros, y sólo como recomendación, viendo lo que sufren los perros con heridas en la cola, y lo difícil que es curarlas (además suelen ser los que nos reciben con mayor entusiasmo...). Viendo lo antiestéticos que son los perros con una torcedura en la cola o con "protecciones" de esparadrapo. O conociendo los destrozos en vajillas, cristalerías o jarrones en perros de cola "potente" en interiores... Para estos casos sería recomendable, o admisible, el amputar la cola, y siempre por decisión del clínico veterinario.

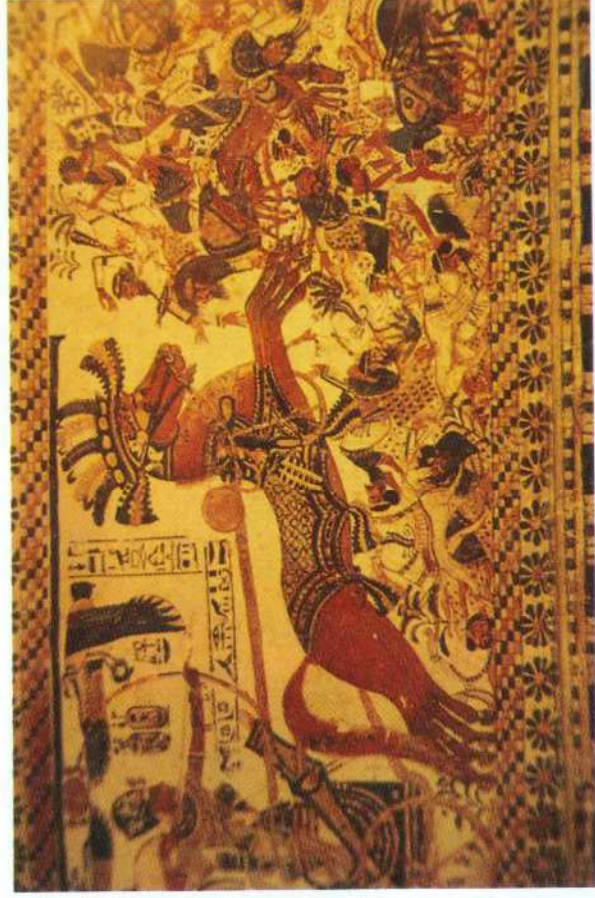
**Orejas:** En cuanto al recorte de orejas, lo dejaría, aunque sin apoyarlo, al gusto de cada persona, aunque ello obligaría a una ampliación de los estándares de las razas a



# OREJAS ERECTAS, OREJAS CAIDAS

**Dr. Jaume Camps**

Veterinario  
Servicios Profesionales Purina



Lateral del cofre del tesoro de Tutankamon, con dos perros grandes de orejas caídas. Hace 3.320 años. (Museo de El Cairo)

**E**n la descripción biológica y morfológica de los cánidos, una de las características que se citan es la de poseer orejas erectas. La selección natural de millones de años, no ha creado, según puede observarse por los cánidos silvestres conocidos, ninguno con las orejas largas y caídas. Dentro de los cánidos, con 14 géneros y unas 40 especies, de las cuales 10 forman el género «canis» siendo silvestre el lobo, el dingo, el coyote y los diversos chacales, todos tienen las orejas erectas. Todos.

También los otros «caninos», como los varios zorros y el fenec, tienen las orejas erguidas.

El origen del porqué unas variedades de lobo, al convertirse en los perros actuales, fueron transformando, en gran mayoría, sus orejas erectas en largas y colgantes, es uno de los temas más oscuros y de investigación difícil, por no decir imposible.

Ocurrió en la prehistoria y, al no existir partes óseas, no podemos hallar fósiles o restos que lo atestigüen. Sólo suposiciones pueden aportarse sobre el por qué estos cánidos, que entraron en contacto íntimo con el hombre, tengan, en su mayoría, las orejas caídas. Lo único conocido es que **fué debido a la influencia humana, y que ocurrió en la prehistoria.**

## Inicio del cambio

La presencia de perros con las orejas caídas no es invención moderna, aunque debemos reconocer que los grandes cambios, para formar las razas actuales, con pocas excepciones, han ocurrido en los últimos 150 años.

Existen unas representaciones pictóricas, de gran detalle, las de mayor

claridad que conozco, que pertenecen al antiguo Egipto, y nada menos que en el cofre de la tumba de Tutankamon, que representan dos escenas, casi idénticas, ambas con el faraón en su magnífico carro y lanzando flechas con su arco. Una es en una batalla (lateral), y la otra en una cacera de cérvidos (tapa bombacera). En las dos aparecen, en imágenes muy parecidas, dos grandes pe-



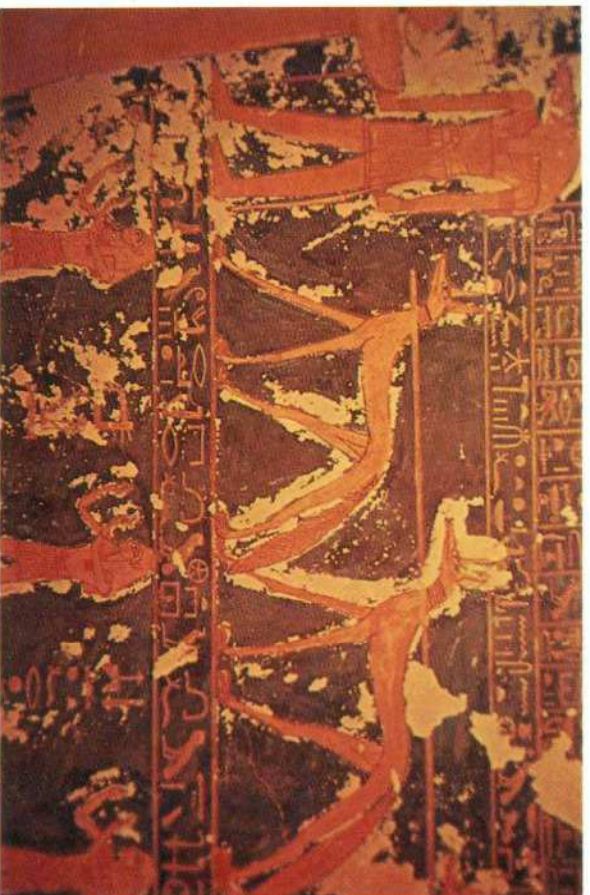
ros color claro, esbeltos, de pelo corto y con las orejas caídas. Muy caídos.

Aparte esta confirmación, ya que también hay molosos esculpidos en Babilonia, nos da a conocer la faceta de que eran empleados esos grandes perros indistintamente tanto para la caza de presa como para la guerra.

En cuanto a explicación escrita que confirme la norma de escoger a los perros con las orejas caídas, incluso los perros de guarda, corresponde al famoso hispano-romano Lucio Columela, que así lo recomienda en el Libro Séptimo de su «De Re Rustica», en el año 42 de nuestra era.

Según lo anterior, el cambio de orejas erectas a orejas caídas ocurriría entre los 10.000 años antes de Jesucristo, final del Pleistoceno, origen del perro como tal, (por hallazgos arqueológicos varios (cueva de Paleogawra-Irak; Star Carr, UK; Ein Mallaha, Israel; cueva del Jaguar, USA), confirmados todos entre los 8.000 y 12.000 años de antigüedad), y anteriores al 1330 a.c. de la XVIII dinastía egipcia con Tutankamón. Son por tanto, unos 8.000 años, que son muchos, suficientes para dar lugar a diversas mutaciones, que fueron escogidas por nuestros antepasados, para ir llegando a la situación del principio de nuestra historia, con perros de funcionalidad bien definida, y de orejas colgantes.

Lo que ya entra dentro de las teorías y suposiciones es el por qué nuestros antepasados prehistóricos, mucho antes de llegar al sedentarismo del Neolítico, fueron escogiendo los perros con orejas caídas, originados por mutaciones que existen en



Grandes perros de orejas erectas, perro de cola larga peluda, en el antiguo Egipto.

¿Por qué?

¿Qué ventajas les vieron para preferirlos?

Curiosa es también la recomendación de Columela para perros de guarda, cuando hoy es al revés y suelen preferirse, al aparentar mayor ferocidad, los perros de orejas erectas, naturales o por cirugía.

### Motivos supuestos de la preferencia a las orejas caídas

Al ir contra lo natural, parece un contrasentido, además va en contra de las habilidades del perro.

Los caninos silvestres tienen una gran movilidad en las orejas, no sólo para conocer la dirección de donde procede el sonido, sino que además es su principal medio de comunica-

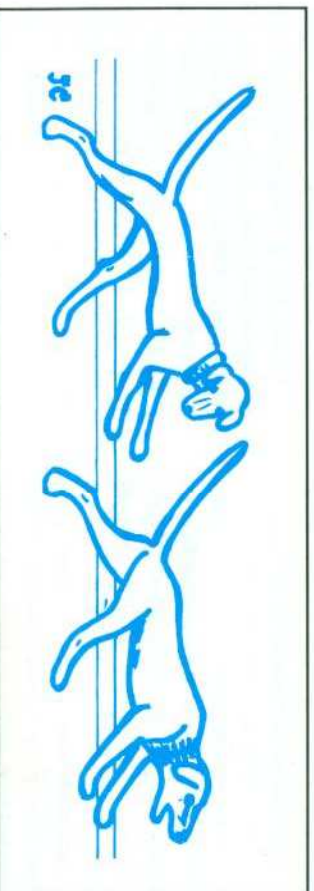
ción etológica. Es casi como el habla en las personas... La postura de las orejas en los cánidos es la forma más visible de comunicación entre congéneres, social y jerárquica, y entre otros animales.

Con las orejas caídas este movimiento, y comunicación, queda muy reducido.

Motivos para escoger los de orejas caídas debieron existir, y posiblemente más de uno.

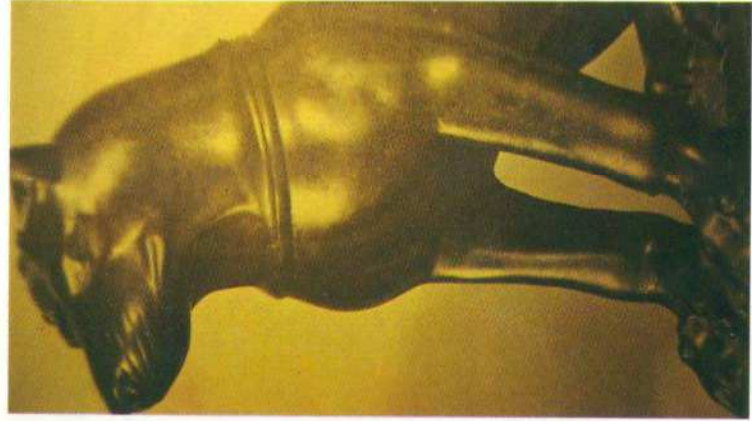
a) El primero que se nos ocurre es la **apariencia infantil**. La mayoría de cachorros de cánidos tienen las orejas dobladas o semi-caídas. El encontrar en una camada un cachorro con las orejas más caídas de lo normal les causaría extrañeza, por la suma curiosidad humana, y luego al ver que le perduraba más su apariencia juvenil (y lúdica), fueron guardándose y, por tanto, procreándose.

b) Otro motivo supuesto, podría ser la conveniencia de **reducirles el sentido del oído**, que algunos cazadores intuyeron como ventaja, al poder dedicar más atención al olfato, y no se distrajeran con sonidos o ruidos que no correspondían con las piezas de caza buscadas. Puede parecer rebuscado, pero hoy día hay una cierta



Calco de los perros del cofre de Tutankamón (J. Campos)





Estatua egipcia de un perro moloso orejas erectas

de orejas caídas, conviene resaltar el contrasentido de perder algo «natural» y que a la vez perjudicaba al perro. No cito la teoría de que la influencia del chacal tuvo que ver con las orejas caídas (K. Lorenz) ya que por los estudios científicos actuales debe descartarse que existiera este hecho.

### Inconvenientes

Las orejas caídas, aparte de la pérdida, parcial, de la comunicación de su estado etológico ya citado, causan una disminución de su potencial auditivo, pues la oreja colgando es una especie de pared delante de su canal auditivo, y les representa una disminución, al tener menor movilidad, en reconocer el lugar de donde proceden los sonidos.

Tienen, por cierto, mayor protección contra la entrada de cuerpos extraños, pero tienen un mayor riesgo de incubación de infecciones e infestaciones, en el interior del oído, a las que son más sensibles los perros de orejas largas y colgantes, al ventilarse menos.

En luchas sociales, o de defensa contra el lobo, las orejas largas son más fáciles de ser mordidas.

Pueden engancharse más fácilmente en arbustos, y dañarse, con hematomas, que debían ser graves en épocas prehistóricas.

Hematomas que, además, se llevan a hacer ellos mismos al sacudir violentamente la cabeza cuando tienen dolor de oído, por acumulación de sangre, debido a la fuerza centrífuga, al girar tan rápidamente.

Son muchas desventajas para que fuesen compensadas por las supuestas razones de la preferencia ancestral.

### Herencia y razas

Las clasificaciones en grupos de las diversas federaciones mundiales, incluye la «Fédération Cynologique Internationale» que es la que rige en España, se basan más en la función que en la genética, por lo que no pueden hacerse comparaciones.

Las clasificaciones de Olsén y Olsén (1977) y Clutton-Brock (1984) son las que parecen tener un mayor

fundamento genético y clasifican a los perros actuales como descendientes de cuatro variedades de lobo (*canis lupus*).

1 El más ampliamente repartido, el **c.l. arabs**, o pequeño lobo del oeste asiático, que formó a los perros desde el Himalaya hasta Europa y los actuales perros americanos, por tanto la gran mayoría de los reconocidos por la F.C.I. Casi todos, con la excepción de los podencos y los pastores del norte de Europa (pastores alemanes, belgas, holandeses, etc.), tienen las orejas caídas. Coincide con la expansión del hombre caucásico o «blanco».

2 El **c.l. chanco**, o pequeño lobo chino, formó a los perros del norte de China y Corea, y sur de Japón. Confirmado más recientemente al comparar el propio material genético (Sugiura, 1977; Hashimoto, 1984) y otros (Guerin, 1980; Fontdevila, 1987; Strickberger, 1985; Jordana, 1990) a través de otras relaciones bioquímicas y filogenéticas.

3 El **c.l. pallipes**, con el dingo como único descendiente. Según otros autores el dingo forma parte de otra especie.

4 El **c.l. lycaon**, como último, o lobo de las turberas, que dió origen a las razas nórdicas o esquimales, tipo Spitz (A. Malamute, Samoyedo, S. Husky, Akita, etc.).

De los cuatro grupos, sólo el más numeroso, procedente del *canis lupus arabs*, es el que tiene gran mayoría de perros con las orejas caídas. Los otros tres grupos, exclusivamente o mayoritariamente, las tienen erguidas.

Por supuesto, con los cruces realizados en los últimos años, la separación certera en estos cuatro grupos no es posible, pero quedan hoy confirmados por las nuevas técnicas científicas, como estudio sobre las razas españolas (J. Jordana, 90) que demuestran tener como originario el *c.l. arabs*, y se llega a detectar inclusive si han existido cruces con perros de otros orígenes.

Por el contrario en el gato, con pocas diferencias entre razas sólo

correlación entre la longitud de las orejas y los grandes especialistas en la búsqueda de caza por el olfato (basset, sabuesos).

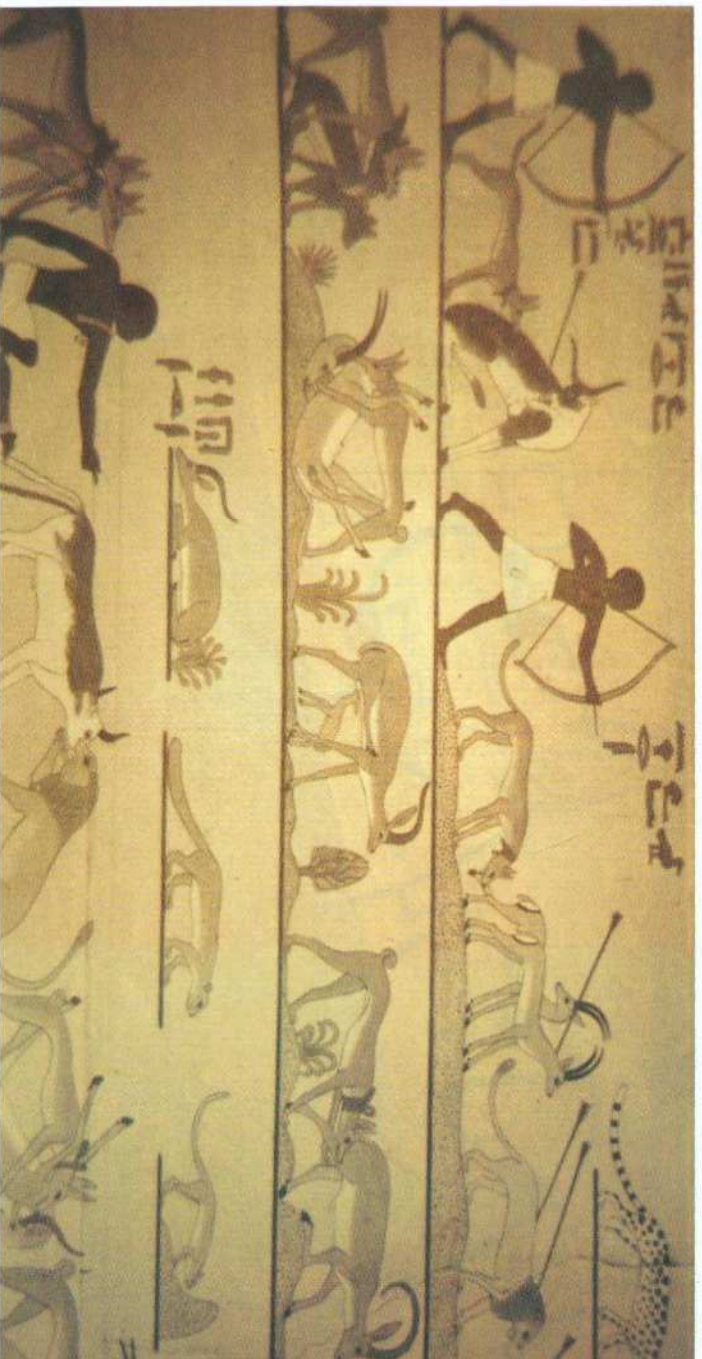
c) Hay un tercer motivo, citado por Desmond Morris, que sería el tener un **aspecto subordinado**. Las orejas erguidas son símbolo de ferocidad y de superioridad dentro de la manada. Orejas gachas es postura etológica de mansos y subordinados. Posiblemente supusieron que les podrían dominar mejor.

d) Quizás vieran que se distinguían más de los lobos, si tenían las orejas caídas.

e) La quinta y última suposición, aunque habrá otras, es el **parecido humano**. Entonces, más que ahora, los canes formaban parte de la «manada» humana, y los perros con orejas caídas tienen la cabeza más redondeada, como las personas y, si además las orejas son peludas, se asemejan aún más a las cabelleras de las personas.

Sean estas, u otras suposiciones, las que hicieron escogerse los perros





Otro tipo, el cuarto, de perros tipo lebreles, orejas erectas y cola roscada como el Basenji

una, Scottish Fold, tiene las orejas ligeramente dobladas y es excepcional, y ni siquiera está reconocida por la Fife.

### Recorte de orejas:

La humanidad caucásica tuvo el error, fisiológicamente hablando, y sin querer culparia, de escoger a perros de orejas caídas, de aquí que, en buena medida, sea la humanidad la que, últimamente haya querido enmendarlo intentando devolver a muchas razas la apariencia de sus antepasados con las orejas erectas, pero no por el cambio gradual genético, posible aunque lento, sino por el cambio rápido y quirúrgico, mediante la técnica del recorte de orejas.

Con toda seguridad, el primer motivo de recortar las orejas sería como intento de curación de alguna herida o hemATOMA.

Después pasarían a hacerlo a aquellos perros que tuvieran que luchar contra fieras o alimañas. Colu-mela, sin embargo, no lo cita en sus dos capítulos dedicados a perros, y sí cita, por primera vez en la historia,

el corte de cola, y hace 1.950 años de ello.

En los perros de presa debió ser decisión antigua, pero en los conocidos actualmente (boxer, doberman, dogo alemán, etc.), la costumbre de recortarlos las orejas ha sido de origen muy reciente, prácticamente desde la misma formación de las razas.

A otras muchas razas se les recortan las orejas por pura estética, aunque son métodos cruentos, criticados por muchos, y ya hay países, como el Reino Unido, en los que está prohibido.

Reconozco que a algunos pueda parecerles práctica cruel, aunque hoy día se realice bajo anestesia y por buenos profesionales, que dan seguridad en los resultados, pero cada día son más quienes se lo cuestionan como, por ejemplo, la Asociación Médica Veterinaria de América (AVMA) que lo está reconsiderando.

La tendencia mundial hacia lo ecológico, y hacia el evitar sufrimientos a los animales, hará que cada día se cuestione esta necesidad de recortar las orejas (y colas), y se busquen o seleccionen razas con orejas erectas

o manteniendo las orejas caídas sin recortar.

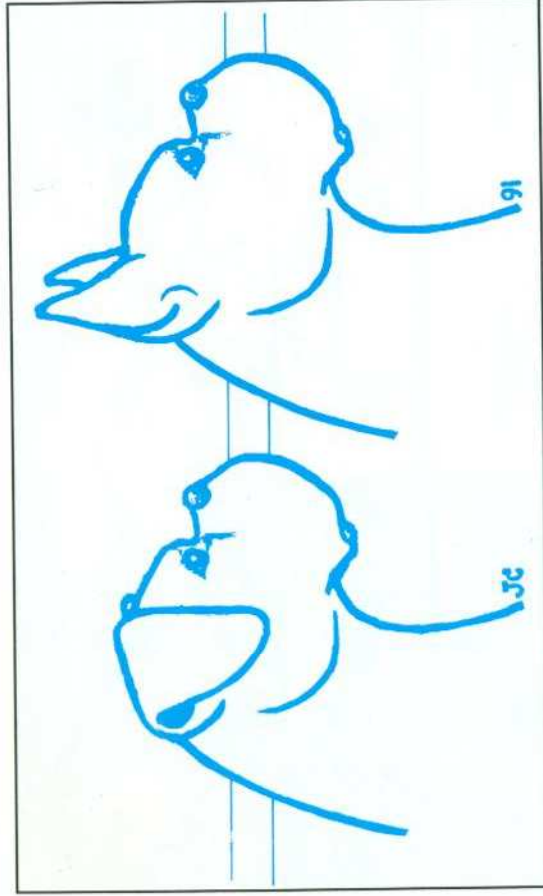
### Razas que en España se les recortan las orejas:

Existen 348 razas conocidas, dentro de las reconocidas por la F.C.I., pero no llegan a 100 las tenidas como «normales». Aparte, y en España son gran mayoría, están los perros mestizos, a los que no es frecuente se les recorten las orejas.

Sólo como detalle final de este escrito, que quiere ser, además de datos para los cinófilos, un alegato hacia la valoración de la necesidad de llegar al recorte de orejas, quiero señalar las razas a las que normalmente se les recortan, ya que incluso está indicado en sus estándares correspondientes, y en algunas razas casi obligatorio para los que se presentan a concursos y exposiciones de belleza:

- Affenpinscher
- Beaucerón
- Berger Picard
- Berger des Pyrénées





Perfil del boxer según estandar actual, con orejas normales y recortadas.  
¿Cuál es más bello?

- Boston Terrier
- Bouvier des Flandres
- Boxer
- Briard
- Dogo Alemán

- Dogo Argentino
- Dobermann
- Grifón de Bruselas
- Mastines (trabajo)
- Mastín Napolitano

- Pinscher (normal y enano)
- Presa Canario
- Pumi
- Schnauzer (gigante, mediano y enano)
- Staffordshire

Algunas tan tradicionales y aceptadas con las orejas recortadas que sólo nos sirven para hacernos reflexionar sobre lo que motivó el cambio de disposición auricular en los perros procedentes del canis lupus arabs, y no en los otros; sobre el porqué de la solución quirúrgica, para devolverles, a algunas razas, sus orejas erectas; y sobre qué tendencias seguiremos en el futuro.

Sean con orejas erectas, caídas, o erectas por cirugía, son tantos miles de años que los perros forman parte de la familia-manada humana, que debemos procurar que cada familia tenga su o sus perros (hay donde escoger), y lo considere como lo que es, un compañero de milenios, leal y sacrificado.

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**European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals**  
**CETS No.: 125**

Treaty open for signature by the member States and for accession by non-member States

Opening for signature  
Place: Strasbourg  
Date : 13/11/1987

Entry into force  
Conditions: 4 Ratifications.  
Date : 1/5/1992

Status as of: 18/1/2013

Member States of the Council of Europe

States	Signature	Ratification	Entry into force	Notes	R.	D.	A.	T.	C.	O.
Albania										
Andorra										
Armenia										
Austria	2/10/1997	10/8/1999	1/3/2000							
Azerbaijan	22/10/2003	19/10/2007	1/5/2008		X					
Belgium	13/11/1987	20/12/1991	1/7/1992		X					
Bosnia and Herzegovina										
Bulgaria	21/5/2003	20/7/2004	1/2/2005							
Croatia										
Cyprus	9/12/1993	9/12/1993	1/7/1994							
Czech Republic	24/6/1998	23/9/1998	24/3/1999		X					
Denmark	13/11/1987	20/10/1992	1/5/1993		X			X		
Estonia										
Finland	2/12/1991	2/12/1991	1/7/1992		X					
France	18/12/1996	3/10/2003	1/5/2004		X			X		
Georgia										
Germany	21/6/1988	27/5/1991	1/5/1992		X					
Greece	13/11/1987	29/4/1992	1/11/1992							
Hungary										
Iceland										
Ireland										
Italy	13/11/1987	19/4/2011	1/11/2011							
Latvia	1/3/2010	22/10/2010	1/5/2011		X					
Liechtenstein										
Lithuania	11/9/2003	19/5/2004	1/12/2004							
Luxembourg	13/11/1987	25/10/1991	1/5/1992		X					
Malta										
Moldova										
Monaco										
Montenegro										
Netherlands	13/11/1987									
Norway	13/11/1987	3/2/1988	1/5/1992							
Poland										
Portugal	13/11/1987	28/6/1993	1/1/1994		X					
Romania	23/6/2003	6/8/2004	1/3/2005							
Russia										
San Marino										
Serbia	2/12/2010	2/12/2010	1/7/2011							
Slovakia										
Slovenia										
Spain										
Sweden	14/3/1989	14/3/1989	1/5/1992							
Switzerland	13/11/1990	3/11/1993	1/6/1994							
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia										
Turkey	18/11/1999	28/11/2003	1/6/2004							
Ukraine	5/7/2011									
United Kingdom										

Non-member States of the Council of Europe

States	Signature	Ratification	Entry into force	Notes	R.	D.	A.	T.	C.	O.
Total number of signatures not followed by ratifications:										2
Total number of ratifications/accessions:										22

**Notes:**

a: Accession - s: Signature without reservation as to ratification - su: Succession - r: Signature "ad referendum".  
R.: Reservations - D.: Declarations - A.: Authorities - T.: Territorial Application - C.: Communication - O.: Objection.

Source : Treaty Office on <http://conventions.coe.int>