

A step back in time?

The Scottish Government proposal
to reintroduce tail-docking



OneKind
Ending cruelty
to Scotland's animals



Summary

In 2007, Scotland demonstrated leadership and became the only country in the UK to ban tail-docking for all puppies. The move was widely welcomed by animal welfare and veterinary organisations and the public, and the ban has protected many thousands of dogs from this unnecessary and painful procedure.

In 2016 the Scottish Government proposed reintroducing tail-docking for working dog breeds. The proposal has been strongly criticised by all the major veterinary bodies and animal welfare organisations operating in Scotland, and recent polling suggests 70% of the Scottish public support the ban as it is.

1. The evidence is clear, puppies experience acute pain when their tails are docked
2. Dogs may suffer lifelong behavioural effects as a result of tail-docking
3. Whilst tail-docking removes the risk of tail injury, there is no evidence of a net benefit for dog welfare
4. Limiting docking to one-third of the tail does not significantly reduce the risk of suffering

To reintroduce tail-docking into Scotland, the Scottish Parliament must repeal or amend parts of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 or the Prohibited Procedures on Protected Animals (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 2007. We believe this would be a step back in time for animal welfare in Scotland, and are calling on all Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) to oppose it.

Introduction

The tail-docking of all dogs has been banned in Scotland since 2007.

Prior to that, OneKind (then known as Advocates for Animals) led a strong campaign to bring this painful mutilation to an end under new animal welfare legislation. Now, however, lobbying by gamekeepers and the shooting industry has persuaded the Scottish Ministers to introduce a proposal for Spaniels and other working dogs to be tail-docked once again.

In October 2016, the Scottish Government announced that it intended to change the law to allow vets in Scotland to dock a maximum of one third in length from the tails of working Spaniels and Hunt Point Retrievers up to five days old “if they believe on the evidence presented to them that they are likely to be used for working in future and that the pain of docking is outweighed by the possible avoidance of more serious injuries later in life”.

OneKind believes that Scotland’s tail-docking ban has been a great success, protecting dog welfare and

demonstrating that Scotland can and will use its powers to lead the way in animal welfare across the UK. Reintroducing docking to prevent injuries in adult dogs is a simplistic response that cannot be justified on animal welfare grounds.

The evidence is clear that young puppies can and do feel pain at the time of docking. Adult dogs undergoing tail amputation would at least do so under general anaesthesia and be provided with pain relief. The tail tip injury may hurt but the actual amputation could be less painful than a puppy being docked.

At the time of writing (February 2017), legislation to amend the ban on tail-docking of puppies in Scotland is in preparation. These changes will require the consent of the Scottish Parliament. OneKind therefore aims to put the animal welfare case to MSPs, press and the public, to ensure that all dogs – above all, young puppies in their very first days of life – are protected from unnecessary pain and long-term behavioural stresses.

Why puppies' tails are docked

Before the ban in Scotland, there were two purposes for the routine docking of puppies' tails:

1. **Cosmetic intervention**, so that individuals – ranging from Yorkshire Terriers to Boxers – would conform to a traditional, unnatural appearance required by different breed standards. It is unlikely that docking on these grounds will be permitted again and even less likely that any veterinary surgeon would agree to carry out the operation for this purpose.
2. **Preventing injuries** - docking was also carried out routinely on a prophylactic basis with the aim of preventing dogs used in field sports, such as Spaniels, Terriers and Pointers, from injuring their tails while working in heavy cover such as gorse or brambles. Adult dogs can sustain distressing injuries to all parts of their bodies in these environments and, self-evidently, a dog cannot injure its tail if it does not have one. It was therefore widely thought to be the lesser of two evils.

There may be an overlap between these motivations, given the traditional expectation that working dogs should be docked.

Current legislation

Tail-docking is technically described as a mutilation – a procedure which interferes with the sensitive tissue or bone structure of an animal. The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006¹ (section 20) prohibits mutilations except “where they are carried out for the purpose of the medical treatment of an animal” or permitted by specific regulations.

The Prohibited Procedures on Protected Animals (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 2007² make specific exemptions to the s.20 ban for procedures mainly used in the husbandry and management of farm livestock. The tail-docking of puppies is not exempted. Since the passage of these Regulations, therefore, it has been illegal to dock a puppy's tail for any purpose in Scotland. It is also an offence to take a dog from Scotland for the purpose of having its tail docked.

Even before the ban it was illegal under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966³, as amended, for anyone other than a vet to dock a dog's tail.

In England and Wales, s.6 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006⁴ prohibits the tail-docking of dogs, except for “certified” working dogs who are not more than five days old, and prohibits the exhibiting of tail-docked dogs in dog shows.

It was once normal for certain breeds, such as Boxers, to have their tails docked but the Scottish ban has successfully made this a thing of the past, normalising intact tails



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A step back in time?

The Scottish Government proposal to permit tail-docking of working Spaniel and Hunt Point Retriever puppies

The Scottish Government proposal for change

In 2016, the Scottish Government consulted on a proposed change in the law to allow vets in Scotland to dock Spaniel and Hunt Point Retriever puppies once again, “if they believe on the evidence presented to them that they are likely to be used for working in future and that the pain of docking is outweighed by the possible avoidance of more serious injuries later in life”.

The changes proposed in the consultation were:

- To permit the docking, by up to a maximum of one third in length, of the tails of working Spaniels and Hunt Point Retrievers before they are not more than five days old; and
- To require such tail-docking to be carried out by veterinary surgeons and only where:
 - they have been provided with sufficient evidence that the dogs will be used for working purposes in the future; and
 - in their professional judgment the pain of docking is outweighed by the possible avoidance of more serious injuries in later life.

In October 2016, the Scottish Government announced that it intended to change the law to implement these proposals. The amendment will require the scrutiny and approval of the Scottish Parliament and OneKind hopes that Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) will view it as most veterinary and canine welfare organisations do - a retrograde step.



The Scottish Government is proposing reintroducing tail-docking for working breeds such as the Springer Spaniel

The evidence base behind the tail-docking ban

1. Puppies experience acute pain when their tails are docked

Tail-docking involves the cutting through or crushing of skin, muscles, and up to seven pairs of nerves, bone and cartilage. Inevitably, this causes significant pain.

An Australian study of 50 puppies of traditionally docked breeds during and after the procedure found that the puppies struggled and vocalised intensely and repeatedly (shrieking vocalisations) at the time of docking⁵.

A later study⁶, also from Australia, concluded that all the available scientific evidence reviewed was consistent with the claim that docking causes acute pain. No evidence was found to support the counter-claim that newborn pups do not experience any pain at the time of docking.

Tail-docking has historically been performed when puppies are not more than five days old (this is still a legal requirement in England and Wales, where the docking of working dogs is permitted). The five-day rule derives from the long-held belief that immaturity protects young puppies against experiencing acute pain.

“*We are opposed to the docking of puppies’ tails. We believe that puppies suffer unnecessary pain as a result of docking, and are deprived of a vital form of canine expression.*”⁷

British Veterinary Association

“*We did not support the exemption for working dogs in England and Wales and we believe that Scotland should maintain the best welfare standards possible in this area, especially as this is often cited as a key example of how Scotland has led the way on dog welfare issues.*”⁸

Dogs Trust

Traditionally and anecdotally, many owners and some vets who carry out docking dispute that puppies experience this pain. They argue that, while puppies may squeal at the time of the cut, they quickly return to their mothers to suckle or sleep. These observations cannot be taken as evidence of the absence of pain. In fact, they could indicate the reverse. There may be evolutionary reasons for puppies sleeping and suckling, as a way of conserving strength at a time of injury. To minimise risk of predation, vulnerable young puppies will stay silent to avoid detection. It is also possible that puppies suckle to reduce the pain, as the act of suckling stimulates the release of endogenous opioids (endorphins) that produce analgesia⁹.

In general, it is no longer accepted that performing procedures on animals at younger ages results in less pain than in adults. Indeed, there is a considerable body of evidence that the reverse is true. Research commissioned by the Scottish Government from the University of Glasgow, published in the *Veterinary Record* on 23 April 2014^{10,11} stated; “neonates have similar, if not increased, sensitivity to pain compared to adults”.

The perception that puppies do not feel pain is at odds with the considerable scientific evidence that other species such as pigs and lambs suffer significant pain when they are tail-docked, and for some time afterwards.

In a report on castration and tail-docking of lambs¹² the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) noted the ability of very young animals to feel pain:

“There is now solid evidence, which demonstrates that newborn lambs, and even those born prematurely, have the basic neuronal circuitry needed for processing nociceptive information and are capable of showing behavioural and physiological responses to noxious stimulation. Although it is a moot question what this evidence tells us about the experience of pain in young animals, it is now generally accepted that newborn of all vertebrate species are capable of experiencing pain and that its prevention and management are important.”

The FAWC report also said:

“[...] it is a difficult ethical judgement as to whether to perform a painful procedure on large numbers of animals for the potential benefit of a small minority.”

The pain may be of long duration - as with many humans, dogs may live with long-term pain without it being very obvious. There is evidence that dogs may suffer from some types of “pathological” long-term pain as a result of the tissue damage caused by docking.

In humans, amputation is often associated with long-term pain; about one fifth of amputees report attacks of “phantom limb” pain or stump pain even two years

after amputation. Pain also occurs in a small number of people who experience limb amputation very early in life, suggesting that this may be possible in dogs.

Dogs may suffer pain from neuromas caused by tail-docking. Severing nerves in mammalian species produces physiological and biochemical changes, including spontaneous nerve tissue activity. One result is the formation of neuromas, swollen bundles of regenerating nerve fibres that develop when nerves are severed. These can persist for weeks or indefinitely, causing spontaneous nerve activity that could be perceived as pain. Dogs may therefore have increased sensitivity or pain in their tail stumps for long after the stump has apparently healed¹³.

2. Dogs may suffer lifelong behavioural effects as a result of tail docking

The effects of tail-docking extend beyond pain at the time of the procedure, or even continued pain afterwards. A dog’s tail is an important part of its anatomy and physiology. Because of the relationship between the muscles in the dog’s tail, back and pelvic area, tail-docking can have long-term consequences for the functioning of the muscles associated with the rectum, anus and pelvis. Chronic health problems associated with damage or degeneration of the tail and pelvic muscles include an increased risk of faecal incontinence, acquired urinary incontinence and perineal hernia (where the rectum, abdominal contents or pelvic contents break through the muscular wall of the pelvic cavity).

Tail-docking can also have adverse effects on the dog’s movement, communication and behaviour. A tail supports and stabilises the back and aids balance in various activities. In addition, the carriage and movement of the tail are very important in communicating the dog’s emotional state, including friendliness, dominance, submission and antagonism. This applies both to the dog’s relationship with other dogs and with people.

The socialisation of puppies may be negatively affected by the pain and distress of tail-docking, which is typically carried out before the critical formative period of a dog’s life, when social skills are established¹⁴.



Docking is an unnecessary mutilation. Should a tail be badly damaged then it can be humanely amputated but to take the tail off every pup that MIGHT one day have it damaged is simply unacceptable in the 21st century.¹⁵

Dr Andrew Cage BVM&S MRCVS

3. Whilst tail-docking removes the risk of tail injury, there is no evidence of a net benefit for dog welfare

OneKind appreciates that the intention behind the Scottish Government's proposal is to minimise, as far as possible, the incidence of painful and disabling tail injuries in adult dogs used for working in the field. We accept that these injuries can be serious and in the worst cases can result in full or partial tail amputation.

At present, however, we do not believe that there is sufficient evidence of a net benefit for animal welfare to be gained from the proposed exemption that would justify its introduction at this stage.

The research commissioned by the Scottish Government from the University of Glasgow^{16,17} unsurprisingly concluded that the incidence of tail injury has increased since the prohibition on tail docking was introduced. A dog without a tail cannot sustain a tail injury.

However, the researchers pointed out that a high number of puppies would need to be docked in order to prevent one tail injury resulting in veterinary treatment in a dog's lifetime – between 81 and 135. To prevent one tail amputation in a Spaniel, 320 Spaniel puppies would need to be docked.

It is unsatisfactory to attempt to compare a small number of injuries to adult dogs, which we do not in any way dismiss as trivial, with a very high number of injuries to puppies. Which type of injury is "worse"? For example, it might be thought that an injury leading to tail amputation in an adult dog is "more serious" than an injury caused by early docking. But can the same be said of lacerations and contusions, which are common in working dogs, affect different parts of the body including the tail, and vary greatly in severity?

Reporting on the first of their studies, Glasgow University authors commented:

"Intuitively one would hypothesise that repeated tail tip injuries, followed by an amputation as an adult, would be more painful than the pain of being docked as a puppy."

This is a reasonable hypothesis - but it only addresses the most serious scenario of repeated injuries followed by amputation as an adult, and these are not the majority of cases.

While painful and distressing for the dog, it must be remembered that serious tail injuries are relatively rare.

In addition, adult animals undergoing tail amputation would do so under general anaesthesia and be provided with pain relief. The tail tip injury may hurt but the actual amputation could be less painful for the dog than being docked as a puppy.

This issue was raised by more than one response by individual veterinary surgeons to the Scottish Government consultation. One said:

"I have been a veterinary surgeon for 24 years working primarily in rural and suburban areas. Many of my patients have been working dogs. I have never seen a tail injury received in the line of work."¹⁸

4. Limiting docking to two-thirds of the tail does not significantly reduce the risk of suffering

The Scottish Government proposal would only allow docking of the end third of the tail in Spaniels and Hunt Point Retrievers.

It may be thought that the consequences for the dog's behaviour and communication abilities are likely to be less serious if a smaller part of the tail is removed. Some of the known longer-term effects of docking, such as damage or degeneration to the tail, back and pelvic area, or adverse effects on movement, communication and behaviour, might be reduced.

As far as pain is concerned, while there is less tissue to cut through further away from the body, pain sensation is probably the same throughout the length of the tail. The evidence suggests that the pain of cutting through skin, nerves, cartilage and blood vessels in a new-born puppy's tail would be similar whether the cut is close to the end of the tail or close to the body. It is also questionable whether removing only a third of the tail would reduce other known long term consequences such as inflammation, neuroma formation or phantom limb pain, or negative effects on puppy socialisation due to the early pain and distress of tail-docking.

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It is not possible at the age of 3 - 5 days for anyone to guarantee that a pup will become a successful working dog. Working dog owners should not allow any dog to work in areas that pose an unacceptable risk to injury. The two studies referenced in this consultation do not provide robust scientific evidence.¹⁹

Scottish SPCA

Implications of the partial repeal proposal for the veterinary profession

If the Scottish Government proposal for partial repeal proceeds, individual veterinary surgeons will be required to make the decision as to whether to comply with a client's request to dock tails. Given that docking goes against the position of both the British Veterinary Association and the RCVS, many vets will no doubt refuse to undertake the procedure. Vets prepared to go against the position of their representative bodies, possibly due to client pressure, will have to assess the pros and cons of every case.

Among the questions vets will have to ask themselves and their clients are the following:

Is it necessary to dock this puppy in order to prevent future injury?

There is little or no guidance available to vets as to how – or whether – the smaller number of “more serious injuries later in life” really do outweigh the pain inflicted on every single puppy docked shortly after birth.

Under the Scottish Government proposal, vets will have to judge whether all the young puppies in a litter presented in the surgery are really going to grow up to be working dogs, based on what the owners or breeders tell them. Anecdotal evidence from England and Wales, where the docking of working dogs is still permitted, suggests that declarations made by owners are not always correct.

In England and other parts of the UK where working dogs may be tail-docked, there are certification procedures made under s.6 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, mainly relying on a statement from the puppy's owner²⁰. There are two difficulties with this – firstly, the possibility that the owner's statement is not true. In its response to the consultation on the proposed Welfare of Animals (Docking of Working Dogs' Tails and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) in 2011²¹, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) stated:

“Anecdotal evidence from England and Wales points to a number of cases where dogs being docked do not go on to become working dogs, nor in some cases was it the intention of the owner/breeder presenting the dog for docking that it would ever become a working dog. Such anecdotal reports suggest that the evidence that veterinary surgeons are required to be shown before certifying that a dog is one permitted to have its tail docked does not provide adequate assurance that a dog is likely to go on to work.”

Docked litters of working breeds such as Weimaraners can be found for sale on classified advertising websites – a clear indication that the puppies' future was undecided at the time of docking.

A further difficulty is that even a puppy that was genuinely intended from birth as a working dog may for some reason not be used in that manner, meaning that it would undergo tail docking unnecessarily.

What sort of pain relief is available and suitable for this puppy?

If tail-docking is to be permitted, veterinary practitioners must be enabled and obliged to provide the optimum pain relief. And yet, OneKind understands, the assessment of different forms of analgesia, and guidelines as to adequate pain relief for docking procedures remain the subject of research. This will lead to difficulties for vets who have a professional duty to avoid unnecessary animal suffering.

For an adult dog undergoing tail amputation, veterinary surgeons would normally give non steroidal anti inflammatory drugs (NSAID) for pain relief, but the two main NSAIDs in use are not suitable for animals under 8 weeks old. These would only be used with extreme caution in puppies under 5 days old as they do not have a mature enough liver to metabolise them. A vet might use them if absolutely necessary - but it is not established that docking is absolutely necessary. Therefore, vets would have to choose between docking with no pain relief or putting the animal at risk by using pain relief.



To remove a significant part of the tail is like preventing a significant part of human speech.²²

Professor Donald Broom, Emeritus Professor of Animal Welfare, Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge

Docked Weimaraners are commonly seen in England, where a tail-docking exemption for working dogs applies



The Glasgow University research

Two Glasgow University research studies^{23,24} were relied on in the Scottish Government consultation and were referenced in submissions on both sides of the argument.

While the authors suggest that their research offers a basis on which to consider changes to the current tail-docking legislation for specific breeds of working dogs, the studies do not of themselves make the case for a change of legislation. They do indicate an increased risk of tail injury in dogs with tails, but they also show that docked dogs can suffer injuries, and that a high number of puppies would have to be docked to prevent injury – especially injury so severe as to require an amputation in adult life.

There are also many questions left to answer before it could possibly be concluded that tail-docking offers a net welfare benefit for working dogs. The research was not required to consider the pain of docking (although the authors acknowledged the evidence “that neonates have similar, if not increased, sensitivity to pain compared to adults”), the long term health and behavioural effects, or potential alternatives to docking such as selecting safer terrain or not using a vulnerable dogs when shooting (proponents of tail-docking often cite repeated injuries to a single dog).

Study 1

Survey of tail injuries sustained by working gundogs and terriers in Scotland (Study 1) reported on an online survey completed by owners of working dogs recruited through three major country sports associations with a total membership of 17,500. At 6%, the response rate was low, with results from a self-selecting sample of 1,005 respondents and 2,860 dogs.

It was not possible to say whether the dogs owned by non-respondents had had problems or not and this was acknowledged by the authors as a concern. The country sports community is known to be critical of the complete tail-docking ban and this may have increased the prevalence of tail injuries reported to the researchers.

Although 317 dogs were reported to have sustained at least one tail injury, only 103 dogs were reported to have required veterinary treatment.

Tail injuries can vary in severity, from minor abrasion to severe laceration, but the nature of the injuries reported were not verified, for example, by following up with the dog’s veterinary practice.

8% of the tail injuries reported were not related to work – some of these occurred at home.

The injury rate reported by owners was high among undocked Spaniels and Hunt Point Retrievers (56.5% and 38.5% sustaining at least one tail injury in the previous shooting season). However, most working dogs in the survey already had a docked tail (52.9% overall, rising to 79.8% in Spaniels) and, overall, 13.5% of all the working dogs sustained an injury during the period. There was little statistically significant difference between the rates of injury to docked and non-docked Retrievers, Pointer/Setters, Terriers and others. The significant differential appeared only to concern Spaniels, in line with anecdotal evidence. The percentage of dogs that received veterinary treatment for their injury appears low and it must be assumed

therefore from this that most injuries were relatively minor.

Based on the responses to the survey, the authors concluded that between 18 and 108 working breed puppies would need to be docked to prevent a single veterinary treatment. For Spaniels specifically, between 6 and 36 Spaniel puppies would need to be docked to prevent a single veterinary treatment. Given the limitations of the study, and the contrasting results in Study 2 (see below) this may well be an underestimation.

The variation in the figures is due to the difficulty in estimating how many puppies in a litter will go on to be working dogs - one of the fundamental flaws with allowing certain working breeds to be docked.

Study 1 pointed out that docking as a puppy does not entirely remove the risk of subsequent tail injury, or indeed injuries to other parts of the body. The authors recommended that:

“Gun dog owners should also be encouraged to reduce the risk of tail injury by, for example, ensuring dogs are housed in suitable kennels and if feasible selecting less hazardous areas for a shoot or field trial. It is recognised that the selection of the area for a shoot is difficult to manage. However, the fact that 44.3% and 36.8% of ‘worst tail injuries’ were reported to have occurred while working in ‘cover’ or woodland, respectively may help owners with dogs prone to tail injury decide which shoots or field trials to attend.”

Study 1 concluded that “Docking the tails of HPRs and Spaniels by one-third would significantly decrease the risk of tail injury sustained while working in these breeds.” However, neither the severity of the injuries reported nor the pain of docking was assessed and therefore it would be difficult to conclude that this would outweigh the pain and longer-term consequences of tail-docking puppies.

Study 2

The prevalence of tail injuries in working and non-working breed dogs visiting veterinary practices in Scotland (Study 2) reported on tail injuries presented at 16 veterinary practices in Scotland, using data mining of computerised clinical records available between 2002 and 2012.

While this produced a very large number of records covering over 100,000 dogs, only eight veterinary practices were able to provide sufficient comparisons of tail injury prevalence before and after the tail-docking ban to make any statistical comparison possible, except in Spaniels.

Going on this evidence, Study 2 indicated that the odds of tail injury requiring veterinary examination of a Spaniel was 2.3 times higher than it had been before the ban on tail-docking. We do not know however whether any of the injured dogs were already docked, but this is possible given the prevalence of docked dogs still working, as reported in Study 1. The general nature of 585 tail injuries is recorded (lacerations, contusions and so on) but not the severity of the injuries although they were all severe enough to require attendance at the veterinary practice. The proportion of injuries that can be ascribed to being a “true” working dog is not given.

The results provided evidence of an increased rate of tail injury requiring veterinary treatment in working

dogs since the implementation of the Scottish tail-docking ban, and unsurprisingly supported the view of gundog owners that working dog breeds are more likely to sustain a tail injury than non-working breeds.

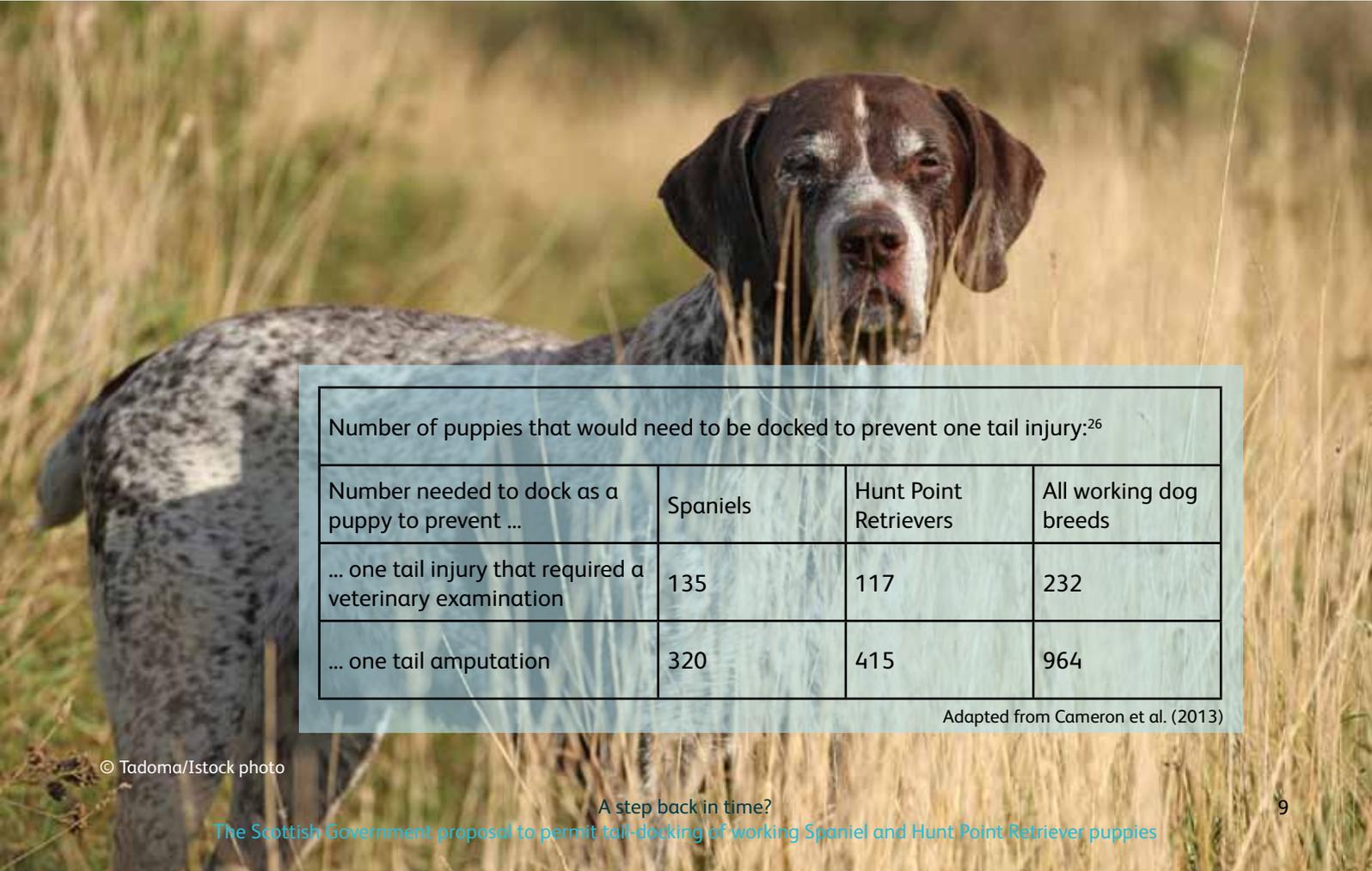
The prevalence of tail injuries requiring veterinary treatment in Study 2 was 0.9% for working breeds, whereas in Study 1, owners reported a 4.4% rate for their dogs. This considerable difference may cast doubt on the reliability of the data in Study 1.

Study 2 also concluded that an extremely high number of dogs would have to undergo the painful mutilation of tail-docking in the first few days of life, in order to prevent one injury in an adult working dog. An average of 320 Spaniels would have to be docked to prevent amputation of one individual’s tail in that breed group.



The results from the research submitted as evidence for the docking of working Spaniel and Hunt Point Retriever puppies’ tails in Scotland is not robust enough for valid conclusions to be drawn. We would not support any changes to the legislation on this basis.²⁵

Dogs Trust



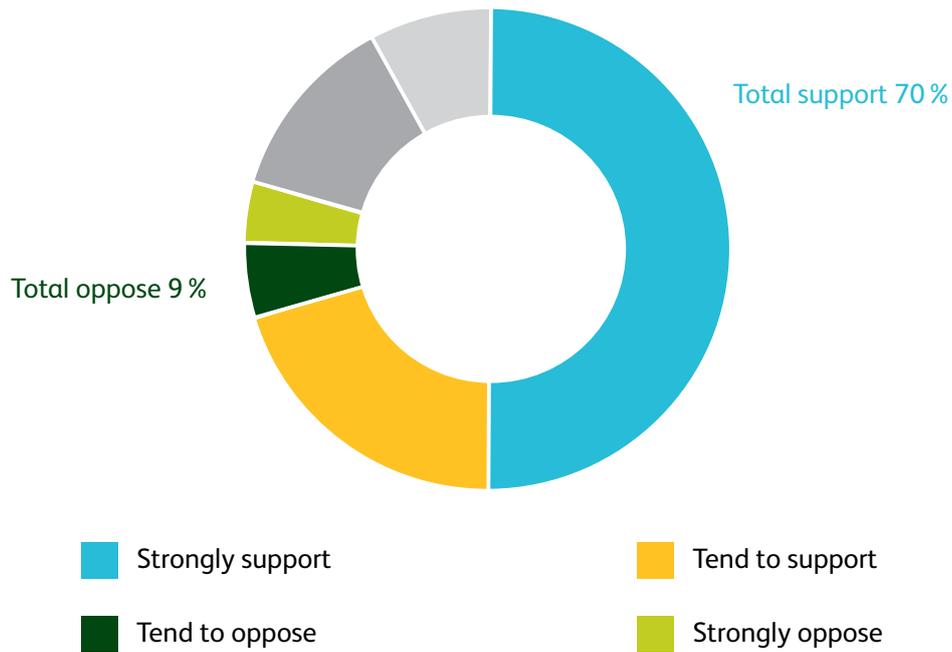
Number of puppies that would need to be docked to prevent one tail injury: ²⁶			
Number needed to dock as a puppy to prevent ...	Spaniels	Hunt Point Retrievers	All working dog breeds
... one tail injury that required a veterinary examination	135	117	232
... one tail amputation	320	415	964

Adapted from Cameron et al. (2013)

Opposition to tail-docking

Public opinion is against a reintroduction of tail-docking. In a 2016 opinion poll of the Scottish public²⁷, 70% of those polled believed the ban on docking puppy tails should be maintained for all dogs.

How much you would support or oppose maintaining the ban on docking puppy tails for all dogs



Most animal welfare and veterinary organisations oppose tail-docking and have called upon the Scottish Government to retain its ban. This includes the key veterinary bodies the British Veterinary Association and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, which “is opposed to the docking of puppies’ tails and considers that the docking of all breeds of dogs should be banned other than for veterinary medical reasons”²⁸, as well as the Dogs Trust, the Scottish SPCA, the Blue Cross, Canine Concern Scotland Trust, and Battersea Dog and Cat Home.

Conclusion

OneKind believes that the Scottish Government should not proceed with the proposed exemption until it has further evidence regarding the pain of tail-docking, long term health and behavioural effects, and alternatives to docking such as selecting safer terrain or not using a vulnerable dog when shooting.

If, in view of the on-going concern about injuries to adult dogs, a limited repeal of the tail-docking legislation is to remain under consideration, the short- and long-term pain experienced by puppies due to tail-docking must be studied as a priority, and a full cost-benefit analysis carried out of this pain versus the pain suffered by dogs that experience tail injuries in later life.

Without this information, OneKind believes it would be premature to relax Scotland’s ban on tail-docking, even in the limited way suggested.



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