



Dogs with docked tails significantly less likely to sustain tail injuries

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Dogs with docked tails are significantly less likely to sustain tail injuries, finds research published in this week's Veterinary Record. The Council of Docked Breeds would like to congratulate the team on undertaking what appears to be an excellent study. We ourselves appreciate that collating worthwhile data from dog owners who are experiencing tail damage is not a simple task, due to their minds being concentrated on getting the dog well again and not on filling out paperwork. The data available to the research team is impressive.

We note that there were 281 tail injuries recorded from a population of 138,212 dogs attending the 52 participating practices. From this it was deduced that the risk of tail damage was just 0.2% or that 500 docked dogs would only prevent 1 tail damage case. Unfortunately, this simply shows the risk as a percentage of the total dog population and does not represent the risk to undocked dogs in previously docked breeds. Conversely, a number of breeds shown to damage their tails were breeds which have NOT historically been docked.

The 281 dogs with damaged tails were recorded from just 52 veterinary practices. According to the RCVS there are 3000 verified vet practices in the UK. If these 52 were representative of them all, then circa 16,000 dogs would have suffered tail injuries in the UK for that 12 month period and circa 5,000 would have undergone adult tail amputation! Even if it were 50% of this figure, this is nothing short of a scandal, resulting from an Act of Parliament that was designed to protect the welfare of animals.

We also read with interest that undocked dogs were most likely to damage their tail in the home and that dogs which were NOT worked would be just as likely to damage their tails, both points have been put forward by the CDB for many years.

To gauge the full effect of the legislation, a repeat study would be required comparing only dogs in those breeds which were traditionally docked before the ban, were born AFTER the ban and the percentage of those that required veterinary attention to their new long tails.

This study was a giant leap forward and indicates that tail damage since introduction of the Animal Welfare Act is far worse than we thought possible. Unfortunately, it was not breed specific and too early to evaluate the full extent to which tail docking reduces the risk of tail damage in Great Britain, one of its primary aims.

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More tail docking information and contact details at www.cdb.org

Note for editors:

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