



UNIVERSITY OF MILAN
ITALY

FONDAZIONE INIZIATIVE
ZOOFILATTICHE E ZOOTECNICHE

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
37th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF THE ISAE**

June, 24-28 2003
Abano Terme - Italy
Hotel Terme
Alexander Palace



EDITO A CURA DELLA
FONDAZIONE INIZIATIVE ZOOFILATTICHE
E ZOOTECNICHE - BRESCIA
Via A. Bianchi, 1 - 25124 Brescia

PREVALENCE OF TAIL BITING IN PIGS AND ASSOCIATIONS TO CARCASS CONDEMNATIONS – A FINNISH PILOT STUDY

A. VALROS, S. AHLSTRÖM, H. RINTALA, T. HÄKKINEN, H. SALONIEMI

Section for Animal Hygiene, Department of Clinical Veterinary Sciences,
P.O.Box 57, 00014 University of Helsinki, Finland

The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of tail biting in Finland and the relationship between tail biting and carcass condemnation. Tail docking as a way of controlling tail biting is not allowed in Finland.

The material consisted of 10852 pigs slaughtered during one week at a Finnish abattoir. The quality of each tail was classified as healthy, healed tail biting or inflamed tail biting. The length of the tail was recorded as normal or short (< 10 cm). A tail that was both inflamed and short was defined as severely bitten. Associations between tail biting and risk of carcass condemnations were estimated using χ^2 -tests. Tests were performed with SPSS (8.0) for Windows.

A total of 35% of the pigs had bitten tails. 12% of all pigs had inflamed tail bites, while 23% showed evidence of healed tail biting. 1.3% of the pigs had severely bitten tails. All kinds of tail biting increased the risk for both whole and partial carcass condemnations ($p < 0.001$ for all). This was especially clear in pigs with severe tail biting: 27% of these pigs had at least some parts condemned, while the corresponding percentage for healthy-tailed pigs was 5.1% ($p < 0.001$). Especially the risk for condemnations due to arthritis and abscesses increased significantly in all kinds of tail bitten pigs ($p < 0.01$ for all).

The percentage of tail biting was unexpectedly high and shows that tail biting is a serious problem in Finland. The result might be slightly exaggerated as healed tail bites possibly include some tails injured otherwise. Tail biting causes a highly increased risk of carcass condemnation, also in its less severe forms, showing that, in addition to being a serious welfare problem, tail biting causes big economical losses.