

Tail docking of dogs

Tail docking as a practice applies to various different species. Welfare requirements should always be observed when considering any form of docking.

Docking of puppies' tails

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. Chronic pain can arise from poorly-performed docking.

We would reiterate that surgical operations should not be undertaken unless necessary for therapeutic purposes and that docking should be banned as a procedure, other than for veterinary medical reasons, for all breeds of dog.

Current legislation

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Tail docking is banned - except for certain working dogs or medical purposes.

Tail docking can only be performed by a veterinary surgeon (at their discretion) and they must certify that they have seen evidence that the dog is likely to work in specified areas and is of a specified working type. The dog must be no older than five days when docked and needs to be microchipped before it is three months old (or eight weeks in Northern Ireland).

It is illegal to show a dog with a docked tail (docked after April 2007 in England and Wales, or 1 January 2013 in Northern Ireland) in any shows where the public pay to enter, except where they are demonstrating their working ability.

Scotland

In 2017 MSPs reversed the total ban on tail docking to permit the docking of tails by up to a third in spaniels and hunt point retrievers.

The Scottish Government is yet to develop a template certificate for completion when docking a dog's tail in Scotland.

More information

[Certificate to be completed by the vet when docking a dog's tail in England](#)

[Certificate to be completed by the vet when docking a dog's tail in Wales](#)

[Certificate to be completed by the vet when docking a dog's tail in Northern Ireland](#)

[RCVS guidance on tail docking](#)

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