



Tail Docking Standard Operating Procedure

Corresponds with requirements AW4.11

Justification

Tail docking shall only be carried out if failure to do so would lead to welfare problems.

Details of procedure

Lambs can be restrained either by hand or in cradles.

The tail shall be docked no shorter than the third palpable joint.

Two different techniques may be used:

1. Thermocautery (Docking Iron): This method sanitizes the wound and prevents bleeding
2. Application of an elastrator band

If using a hot knife when windy, consider using a wind block to maintain the knife at optimum temperature. A knife that is too cold will not cut through the tail in one motion. A knife that is too hot will cut through the tail too quickly and not cauterize the tail tip and increase the amount of blood loss.

Pain relief measures

For all methods, pain relief shall be applied when suitable pain relief is available on the market. Pain management options shall be discussed with a veterinary surgeon and options shall be reviewed regularly.

Age

Lambs shall not be tail docked until the ewe/lamb bond has become established.

The procedure shall be carried out between the ages of 24 hours and 8 weeks.

Care of animal(s) during/after the procedure

Lambs should be handled quietly before, during and after the procedure.

Following the procedure, lambs will be turned back onto dry, clean pasture or a dry, clean pen with their mothers.

Lambs must be inspected regularly following the procedure and with minimal disturbance for signs of post-operative complications during the healing process, and appropriate action taken as indicated.



Precautions

Good hygiene should be practiced in relation to facilities, hands, handling and instruments with disinfectant being used and changed frequently.

Risk of infection can be limited by ensuring ewes have been routinely vaccinated and that the lambs are vaccinated at lamb marking

Consideration of weather and yard conditions and fly activity should be made when planning lamb marking (e.g. avoid muddy yards and wet or humid weather).

Qualifications, experience or training necessary to perform this technique

Only well-trained or well-supervised individuals will perform these procedures.