

Support S2192: Help End the Unnecessary and Cruel Practice of Cattle Tail Docking

Tail docking is the partial amputation—typically without pain killers—of up to two-thirds of a cow’s tail. Scientific studies show that tail docking causes distress, pain, and increased fly attacks, and that it offers no benefit to the animal. The American Veterinary Medical Association and numerous dairy industry representatives oppose routine tail docking of dairy cows and major dairy states like Ohio and California have taken regulatory action against it. Yet the practice remains legal in the Ocean State.

Tail docking causes pain and distress.

Scientific studies have shown that tail docking is a serious welfare problem, causing distress, pain, and increased fly attacks. The American Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and many industry representatives oppose the routine tail docking of dairy cows. The AVMA explains: “Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons.” The CVMA states that “it has been shown that cows are unable to effectively keep flies away once the tail is docked.”



Tail docking is unnecessary.

The National Mastitis Council states that it “knows of no evidence that tail docking improves cow welfare, cow hygiene, or milk quality. NMC does not endorse the routine use of tail docking in dairy cattle.”

- Thomas Quaife, editor, Dairy Herd Management writes: “The cumulative body of research on tail docking speaks loudly ... The dairy industry should eliminate the routine practice of docking tails.”
- The California Dairy Quality Assurance program (CDQA) advises: “There is no benefit to tail docking normal, healthy tails in dairy cattle based on peer-reviewed scientific studies and governmental sponsored research.”
- Hoard’s Dairyman writes: “When it comes to tail docking, it doesn’t really benefit the cow, employee health, or product quality.”
- The National Milk Producers Federation writes: “Tail docking of dairy calves is not recommended. A thorough review of the scientific literature does not support anecdotal reports of the benefits of tail docking.”
- The American Association of Bovine Practitioners concludes that no “sufficient scientific evidence” exists to support the procedure.

Rhode Island should follow the clear scientific consensus on tail docking by banning this cruel and unnecessary practice.

