

Study helps clarify tail injuries in dogs

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English Springer Spaniel with a docked tail

(PhysOrg.com) -- Tail docking is a very emotive subject the world over. A new study will explain the scientific understanding of tail injuries and tail docking in dogs.

The paper by the Royal [Veterinary](#) College (RVC) and the University of Bristol seeks to quantify the risk of tail injury, to evaluate the extent to which docking reduces this risk and to identify other major risk factors of tail injury in a large sample of dogs attending veterinary practices in Great Britain.

Under recent animal welfare legislation tail docking for dogs has been banned outright for non- therapeutic reasons in England, Scotland and Wales, although in England and Wales exemptions are allowed for working dogs.

Dr David Brodbelt, Lecturer in Companion Animal Epidemiology at the RVC, explained: “The practice has always generated strong opinions for and against, many of which are without scientific foundation.”

Key findings from the report include:

- Tail injuries requiring veterinary treatment were rare (prevalence of tail injuries was 0.23 per cent, one in 435 dogs).
- English Springer Spaniels, Cocker Spaniels, Greyhounds, Lurchers and Whippets were at significantly higher risk when compared with Labradors and other Retrievers.

The study, also found that, as expected, dogs with docked tails are significantly less likely to receive an injury. Essentially, approximately 500 [dogs](#) (unadjusted for breed) would need to be docked in order to prevent one tail injury.

Professor Sheila Crispin, co-investigator, from the University of Bristol’s Department of Clinical Veterinary Science, commented: “While it is obvious that injury to the tail is impossible if the tail has been removed, the dog may have also lost an important means of balance and communication.”

More information: The paper appears in the 26 June issue of *Veterinary Record*.

Provided by University of Bristol

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