

# Undocked working dogs at greatest risk of tail injuries in Scotland

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Undocked working dogs in Scotland are at greatest risk of tail injuries, indicates a survey of their owners, published in this week's *Veterinary Record*.

Of 2860 working dogs, 13.5% sustained at least one tail injury during the 2010/11 shooting season. But undocked spaniels (56.6%) and hunt point retrievers (38.5%) were at greatest risk. To ward off one tail injury during one shooting season would require between two and 18 spaniels or hunt point retrievers to be docked as puppies, say the authors, who conclude that docking the tails of these breeds by one-third would significantly decrease the risk of tail injuries.

In a second study, the same authors assessed the prevalence of tail injuries in different breeds of dog seen in 16 veterinary practices across Scotland between 2002 and early 2012.

The overall prevalence of tail injuries was 0.59%. But the prevalence of tail injuries in dogs of working breeds was estimated to be 0.90%.

Working [dog breeds](#) were at a significantly greater risk of sustaining a tail injury than non-working breeds. To prevent one such tail injury in these working breeds around 232 dogs would need to be docked as puppies, calculate the authors. And to prevent one tail amputation in spaniels, 320 spaniel puppies would need to be docked.

Spaniels taken to vets after January 2009 were more than twice as likely to have a tail injury as those taken to a vet before April 29 2007 - the

date when legislation banning tail docking came into force in Scotland.

"Given the results of this and the accompanying paper it may be appropriate to consider changes to the current legislation for specific breeds of [working dogs](#)," conclude the authors.

**More information:** Survey of tail injuries sustained by working gundogs and terriers in Scotland, Online First [DOI: 10.1136/vr.102041](#)

The prevalence of tail injuries in working and non-working breed dogs visiting veterinary practices in Scotland, [DOI: 10.1136/vr.102042](#)

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