



American Sheep Industry
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To Whom It May Concern:

Docking the tails of lambs has long been recognized as being useful in the prevention of fly strike caused by fecal soiling as well as in improving cleanliness. For these reasons, it is appropriate that the tail be removed as humanely as possible at the distal end of the caudal fold in young lambs.

However, the practice of ultra short docking in show lambs has been adopted for many years. This is defined as the amputation of the distal portion of the tail proximal to the caudal fold. It is performed as a cosmetic procedure to enhance the appearance of a more heavily muscled hindquarter.

Ultra short docking of tails has been shown to be associated with significantly increased incidence of rectal and vaginal prolapses. Rectal prolapse is a painful and possibly fatal condition characterized by the rectum protruding outside the anus. The exposed tissue becomes dry and cracked and becomes painful, which causes extensive straining and more tissue exposure.

The American Association of Small Ruminant practitioners' policy statement regarding tail docking in lambs is as follows:

Lambs are tail docked for cleanliness and to minimize fly strike, but cosmetic, excessively short tail docking can lead to an increased incidence of rectal/vaginal prolapse and is unacceptable for the welfare of the lamb. We recommend the lambs' tails be docked at the level of the distal end of the caudal tail fold.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SMALL RUMINANT PRACTITIONERS

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The American Veterinary Association of America's policy statement is as follows:

Lambs' tails may be docked for cleanliness and to minimize fly strike, but cosmetic, excessively short tail docking can lead to an increased incidence of rectal prolapse and is unacceptable for the welfare of the lamb. We recommend that lambs' tails be docked at the level of the distal end of the caudal tail fold and at the earliest age practicable. Because tail docking causes pain and discomfort, the AVMA recommends the use of procedures and practices that reduce or eliminate these effects, including the use of approved or AMDUCA-permissible clinically effective medications whenever possible.

More information regarding this procedure and the American Veterinary Medical Association's position please refer to the link:

<https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference/AnimalWelfare/Pages/Animal-Welfare-Policy-statements.aspx>.

By scrolling down to the sheep heading you will find an excellent video explaining the procedure.

Ultra short docking of lamb tails is contrary to the values that we as sheep producers and veterinarians seek to instill in the responsible production of livestock. This practice compromises the welfare of sheep without any long-term benefits for the animal. As a result, the American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners would like to increase awareness of the seriousness and preventability of rectal prolapse in lambs. We would like to recognize a change in the industry and promote actionable efforts to promote animal welfare and proper animal husbandry in relation to proper tail docking in lambs.

Thank you for your time and efforts,

Susan Myers
President – Elect AASRP