Practice on castration of piglets in Europe

Results of Work package 2 in the EU project PIGCAS (2007-2008)

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Objectives WP2

• To improve knowledge on the extent of the practice of castration and how it is performed in Europe

• To gather and evaluate information about
  – extent of practice
  – conditions under which castration is performed
  – variations between countries
  – variation between production types
Collecting the data

- National contacts (24)
- Regional co-ordinators (5)
- Stakeholder organisations
  - Farmers/breeders
  - Veterinarians
  - Meat industry
  - Pig health services
- Common questionnaire
Presentation of the data

- Average within each country
- Distribution of answers within each country
- Different production systems treated separately
- Comparison of stakeholder groups – not possible

Interpretation of the results must be done with care
Percentage of male pigs castrated – conventional production

Percentage castrated per country

Austria  Belgium  France  Germany  Netherlands  Switzerland  Czech Republic  Slovakia  Hungary  Poland  Slovenia  Estonia  Finland  UK  Ireland  Latvia  Lithuania  Norway  Sweden  Cyprus  Greece  Italy  Portugal  Spain
Percentage of male pigs castrated non-conventional production

- Austria: 100%
- Belgium: 97%
- France: 98%
- Germany: 95%
- Netherlands: 98%
- Switzerland: 97%
- Hungary: 97%
- Denmark: 95%
- Netherland: 100%
- Austria: 99%
- Belgium: 98%
- Denmark: 95%
- Latvia: 100%
- Sweden: 99%
- Portugal: 11%
- Spain: 33%

Legend:
- Orange: Conventional
- Green: Organic
- Blue: Other
Age at castration
non-conventional production

Days

Austria | Belgium | France | Germany | Netherlands | Switzerland | Hungary | Denmark | UK | Latvia | Sweden | Portugal | Spain

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Legend:
- **Orange**: Conventional
- **Green**: Organic
- **Blue**: Other
Use of anaesthesia – overall

- Not used: 187
- Very seldom: 43
- Seldom: 8
- Commonly/very commonly: 6
- Always: 3

Number of answers
Anaesthesia - average

Always

Very common

Common

Rare

Very rare

Never

Norway
Lithuania
Slovakia
Hungary
Austria
Germany
Poland
Finland
UK
Netherlands
Sweden
Slovenia
Spain
Belgium
France
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Latvia
Cyprus
Greece
Italy
Portugal
Analgesia - distribution

Very commonly 75-95%
Commonly 25-75%
Seldom 5-25%
Very seldom 0-5%
Not used 0%

Countries:
- Lithuania (100%)
- Norway (100%)
- Austria (100%)
- Poland (100%)
- Slovenia (100%)
- Switzerland (80%)
- Slovakia (60%)
- United Kingdom (40%)
- Hungary (20%)
- Spain (100%)
- Italy (100%)
- Portugal (100%)
- Belgium (80%)
- France (60%)
- Germany (40%)
- Czech Republic (20%)
- Denmark (100%)
- Estonia (100%)
- Finland (100%)
- Latvia (100%)
- Cyprus (100%)
- Greece (100%)
- France (100%)
- Italy (100%)
- Portugal (100%)
How common are these different types of restraining of piglets during surgery?

- **Czech Republic**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Greece**: Held on flat bench (100%)
- **Slovakia**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Hungary**: Held on flat bench (100%)
- **Finland**: Other methods (80%)
- **Norway**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Slovenia**: Held on flat bench (100%)
- **Poland**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Portugal**: In a v-trough (80%)
- **Italy**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **UK**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Germany**: In a v-trough (80%)
- **Latvia**: Other methods (80%)
- **Austria**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Switzerland**: Other methods (80%)
- **Cyprus**: Held on flat bench (100%)
- **Belgium**: Other methods (80%)
- **Spain**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **France**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Lithuania**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Netherlands**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Estonia**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Sweden**: Suspended by the legs (100%)
- **Denmark**: Suspended by the legs (100%)

Legend:
- Black: Suspended by the legs
- Yellow: In a commercially available device
- Beige: Other methods
- Orange: In a v-trough
- Red: Held on flat bench

Countries are listed in descending order of the percentage of piglets restrained by the legs.
Who performs the castration?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of farmers and veterinarians performing castrations in various countries.](chart.png)
Procedures used to cut the spermatic cord
Two incisions

One incision
Time consume - castration

Seconds per piglet

UK, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, France, Greece, Austria, Finland, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Poland, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Lithuania, Cyprus, Switzerland, Estonia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Hungary
Use of disinfectants and antibiotics

Always
Very common
Common
Seldom
Very seldom
Never

Disinfectant
Antibiotics
Complications

- Often (5-10%)
- Seldom (1-5%)
- Very seldom (0.1-1%)
- Never (0%)

Deaths
Protrusion
Reduced condition
Abscesses
Others

Countries:
- Finland
- Belgium
- Switzerland
- Czech Republic
- Austria
- Norway
- Slovakia
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Denmark
- Portugal
- Estonia
- Hungary
- UK
- Lithuania
- Sweden
- France
- Germany
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Cyprus
- Greece
- Italy
- Latvia
Tail docking

- No tail docking
- >4 days before castration
- 1-4 days before castration
- Same day as castration
- 1-4 days after castration
Conclusions

• Castration is very common in most countries
• Some countries find it possible not to castrate
• Use of anaesthesia and analgesia is rare
• Age at castration and procedures for castration differ widely both within and between countries
• Adverse consequences are rare
• Practices are similar in conventional and organic systems, but differ markedly for some extensive systems
Thanks to

- The regional co-ordinators and national contacts that have gathered all the data

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- The PIGCAS core group
- The EU commission for financing the project