



## Press Release - The Downside of Cutting Piglets' Teeth

The practice of cutting piglets' teeth should be reviewed, French experts say, because of the long-term pain the animals suffer, and its implications for their health. If it must be done, they argue, grinding the teeth causes less trauma than clipping.

Writing in the February 2004 edition of *Animal Welfare*, the scientific quarterly published by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, they describe an experiment they conducted which convinced them that tooth-cutting leads to long-term damage.

The eight "needle" teeth of piglets are often cut shortly after birth to prevent damage to littermates and to the sow's udder. To see whether these benefits outweighed distress and damage to the piglets, the researchers subjected 20 animals to each of three treatments (one per half-jaw): cutting the teeth with clippers, grinding them with a rotating grindstone, and control (leaving the teeth intact).

Four piglets were slaughtered three days later, then four more six, 13, 27 and 48 days after tooth-cutting.

The researchers say most of the effects they found on examining the teeth after slaughter - including fractures, haemorrhages and abscesses - "appeared sooner and were of greater magnitude after clipping than after grinding. Because most... are known to cause severe pain in humans, it is likely that tooth resection - even when achieved through grinding - induces severe pain in piglets. Thus the rationale of this practice should be re-evaluated."

But they conclude that tooth-cutting has implications for husbandry as well as for welfare: "Shortening of piglet teeth... induces major lesions. These lesions are likely to induce pain and to cause health disorders. Therefore, the use of this practice in commercial piggeries needs to be objectively assessed..."

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### Notes to Editors

*Long-term detrimental effects of tooth clipping or grinding in piglets: a histological approach*, by M Hay, J Rue, C Sansac, G Brunel and A Prunier, *Animal Welfare* 2004, Vol 13: 27-32

Other reports in this issue of *Animal Welfare* include:

- improved methods for establishing unconsciousness and death in stranded whales and other cetaceans
- using foul-tasting bait as a non-lethal way to condition foxes
- the need to think twice before releasing captured grey squirrels into supposedly safe habitats
- the negative impact training methods involving punishment have on dog welfare.

For more details and for copies of the report, please contact UFAW's director, Dr James Kirkwood, at the address above.

*Animal Welfare* is published four times a year by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare. If you would like a copy of the issue in which this report appears, or to be put on our press list, please contact UFAW (details above).

### SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

UFAW, founded in 1926, is an internationally recognised, independent, scientific and educational animal welfare charity concerned with promoting high standards of welfare for farm, companion, laboratory and captive wild animals, and for those animals with which we interact in the wild. It works to improve animals' lives by:

- Promoting and supporting developments in the science and technology that underpin advances in animal welfare
- Promoting education in animal care and welfare
- Providing information, organising meetings, and publishing books, videos, articles, technical reports and the journal *Animal Welfare*
- Providing expert advice to government departments and other bodies and helping to draft and amend laws and guidelines
- Enlisting the energies of animal keepers, scientists, veterinarians, lawyers and others who care about animals

***"Improvements in the care of animals are not now likely to come of their own accord, merely by wishing them: there must be research ... and it is in sponsoring research of this kind, and making its results widely known, that UFAW performs one of its most valuable services."***

Sir Peter Medawar CBE FRS, 8th May 1957

Nobel Laureate (1960), Chairman of the UFAW Scientific Advisory Committee (1951B1962)