Curly tails: the Dutch approach

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Tail of the future

- When
- How
The Dutch approach

- Working group Curly tails 2012-2013
- Pig farmers organizations
- Breeding company
- Feeding company
- Animal protection society
- Veterinary society
- Meat company
- Government
- Researchers
Declaration of Dalfsen

- Closing the gap between science and practice
- Relieving anxiety and scepticism of farmers

Road map towards curly tails
Road map

PIC Sterksel of Wageningen UR

1. Demonstration Project
   ‘Yes we can!’

2. Safety net:
   Effective curative measures

3. Network of pro-active farmers

Pig farmers (tail docked pigs)
Design demonstration project

- Not designed as a scientific experiment!

- Every 6 weeks 12 litters undocked piglets (117 in total)

- Varying circumstances:
  - Continuous enrichment or twice a day
  - Different types of enrichment
  - Fully or partly slatted flooring (weaned piglets)
  - Increased number of feeding spaces

- Coaching caretakers about pig needs and behaviour, and early signs of tail biting
Data collection

- Tail scores at 4 times
  - Posture
  - Bite marks, wounds
  - Blood, crusts
- Registration of bite wounds and status of risk factors
- Video registration (incl. sound)
- Effect of curative measures
- Costs of materials and labour
- Experiences of caretakers!!
Evaluation
Findings during a year

- Bite marks already in the farrowing unit
- Practical problems with some materials
  - Dirty pens
  - Clogged manure system
- Inspection of the animals and providing/replacing enrichment is time consuming
- Climate is an important risk factor
- Separate housing for biters and victims is crucial

- Biting problems still occur with an occasional outbreak
Findings during a year

Exchange between caretakers and researchers

- shared insights
- new approaches
Findings during a year

- Administration of roughage has become a routine
- Ideas have been developed for more efficiency in labour
- A traffic light system has enhanced proper care

- A lot of pigs left with intact tails!
Development safety net

- There is no golden standard
- Small measures are not enough!
- Identification of an (obsessive) biter is essential
- Separation room for animals is necessary
Network of farmers

- Different types of farmers (12 in total)
- Aim: decreasing existing tail biting problems and working towards long(er) tails
- Fear: communication of success, with political consequences, negative reactions of colleagues

- Implementing checklists and gathering uniform data
- Learning to recognize early signs of problems
In conclusion

- Closing the gap between science and practice
  - communication
  - demonstration
- Every farm is different:
  - farm specific approach
- Developing protocols and safety net
  - (international!) knowledge and experience
In conclusion

Expand step by step, taking calculated risks

*Innovators*
- Risiconemers

*Early Adopters*
- Nieuw uitdaging
- Hoge acceptatiegraad

*Early Majority*
- Voorlopers
- Moeten voordelen begrijpen

*Late Majority*
- Achterlopers
- Moet noodzaak zijn
- Lage acceptatiegraad

*Laggards*
- Achterblijvers
- Moet gemeengoed zijn
- Positieve ervaringen belangrijk