Tail Docking of Dogs

This information applies to England only
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The docking of dogs' tails has been banned in England since 6 April 2007.

There are exemptions from the ban for certain types of working dog, or where docking is performed for medical treatment.

There is also a ban on the showing of dogs docked after this date at events where members of the public have paid an entrance fee. This ban does not apply where a dog is shown only for the purpose of demonstrating its working ability.

The exemption allows certain types of working dog to have their tails docked by a veterinary surgeon. The dog has to be no more than 5 days old and the veterinary surgeon must certify that he or she has seen evidence that the dog is likely to work in one of the specified areas.

Owners and keepers wishing to have a working dog's tail docked must ensure that this is undertaken in accordance with the law.

Wales and Scotland

The Animal Welfare Act 2006, which contains a general ban on the tail docking of dogs, and the limited exemption to it, applies to England and Wales only. However, regulations detailing how working dogs are identified and certificated have been made separately in the two countries and differ in certain details.

The Animal Health and Welfare Act 2006 in Scotland includes a total ban on all non-therapeutic tail docking of dogs.
Frequently asked questions

What kind of working dogs can be docked?
Any spaniel, terrier, hunt point retrieve breed or their crosses can be docked (as long as the necessary evidence indicating that they are likely to work is produced).

What kind of evidence do I need to prove that my dog will work in order to have it docked?
The puppy must be presented with the dam, and a statement provided by the owner (or the owner’s representative) that the dog is intended to work in one of the specified areas. Additional evidence related to the particular type of work the dog will perform is also required. This is detailed in the regulations.

Can I continue to show my dog if it is already docked?
The showing ban, at events to which the public is charged for admission, only applies to dogs docked on or after 6 April 2007.

Can my dog participate in field trials if it has been docked?
Yes.

Must a vet dock a working dog’s tail if asked to do so?
No – the decision is discretionary. The legislation does not require a vet to dock an eligible dog’s tail.

How do I know if my dog’s tail has been legally docked?
Dogs which have been legally docked must have a certificate issued by a vet. The certificate contains certain information required by law and must be signed by a vet.
