Intact tails

– is it possible?

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Emma Hauge, VKST, emha@vkst.dk

Some history on intact tails

- Tail docking – a tradition for many years
  …they had “less” to bite…
- Do pigs bite less if the tail is short?
- Unevenly docked tails – will promote tail biting
  - (a claim from the barn)

SvineVet årsmøde 2026

Some history on intact tails

- Antonius-pigs
  - A requirement for years
- Special conditions:
  - +30% area
  - Solid floor
  - Provision of straw
- Challenges:
  - 3x withdrawal period for medicine
  - Zinc around weaning?
  - Health problems

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Some history on intact tails

- Tail docking
  - Only legal if absolutely necessary
- Many have tried 5-10% intact tails
- Challenges:
  - Should they be kept separate?
  - Are intact tails a problem in the pen?
  - Health problems
  - What is done to minimize the problems?
    - Are problems used as excuse to tail dock?

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

What have we learned so far

- Commitment is required (owner and employees)
- The conditions need to be perfect
  - More space…?

- Adequate feeding space and feed supply
- Climate management (temp. fluctuations provoke biting)
- Access to rooting and enrichment materials
- Sick pens need to be available

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Before getting started

Is there a weak link somewhere in the production?

Focus on the insertion strategy – dry and warm facilities

Sufficient feeding spaces – no queue by the feed

- Both with dry and liquid feed

- Sufficient water supply
- Climate control
- General behaviour and health

Svinevet Årsmøde 2026

How to handle tail biting

Look carefully for behavioral changes:

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

The tail is hidden

The long hairs on the tail are gone

How to handle tail biting

- Ensure you have sick pens ready
- Everyone knows when the pigs should be in a sick pen!

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Et eksempel på en gris med alvorligt halebid i Martin Lund Madsens besætning. Foto: Fødevarestyrelsens tilsynsrapporter

Hvor meget plads har en gris krav på? Test din viden her - TV 2

How to handle tail biting

How to identify the problem?

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Look for:

- Is it hiding the tail?
- How big is the wound?
- Is the tail red and/or swollen?

Feel the tail:

- Is the tail sore?
- Is the tail warm/swollen

Modified material from svineproduktion.dk

How to handle tail biting

What you should do:

Svinevet Årsmøde 2026

Stay in the pen, if:

Thriving
Small surface wounds
No infection

Moved to sick pen, if:

Deep wounds
Infection (warm, sore, swollen)
Dead, black tissue

Euthanize, if:

Not thriving

No chance of recovery

Controlling tail biting

- Have distraction materials ready
- Everyone knows how to use distraction materials

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

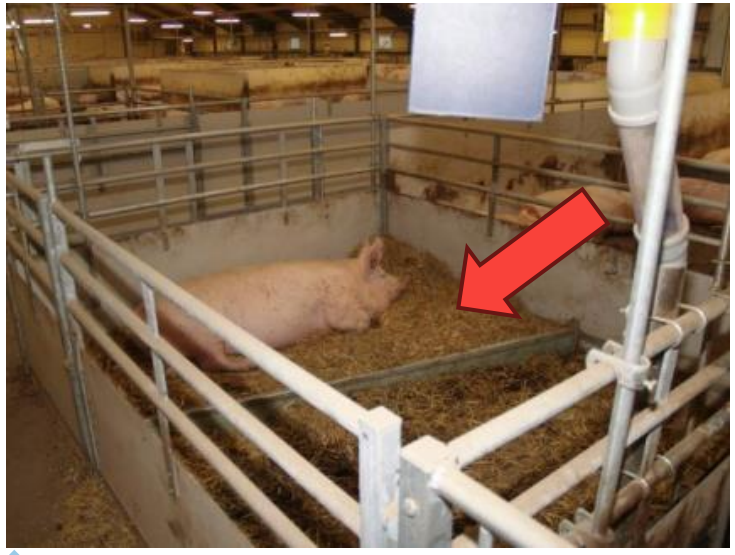
Sick pens – legal requirements

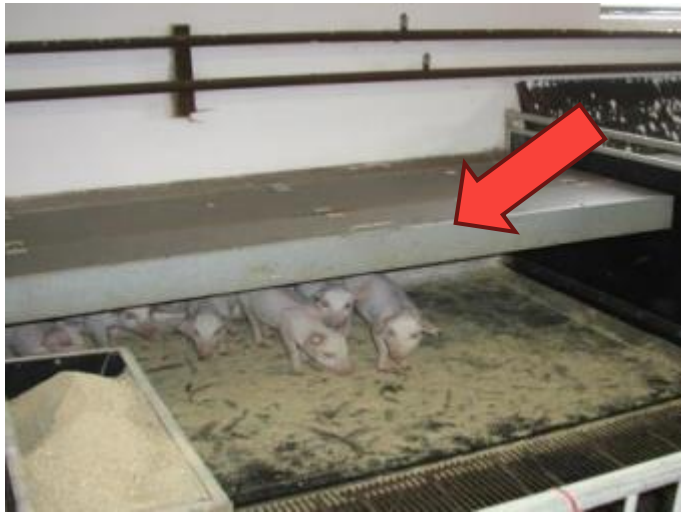
- **Soft and dry bedding (straw/rubber mat)**
  - **2/3 of the minimum area.**
- Access to extra heating
- Cooling facilities
- No draft
- Fresh water and food
- Comply with legal area requirements
- (Keeping of sick journals)

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Sick pens – legal requirements

- Soft and dry bedding (straw/rubber mat)
  - 2/3 of the minimum area.
- **Access to extra heating**
- Cooling facilities
- No draft
- Fresh water and food
- Comply with legal area requirements
- (Keeping of sick journals)

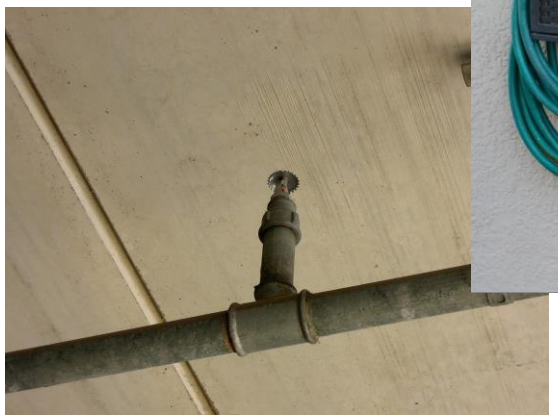


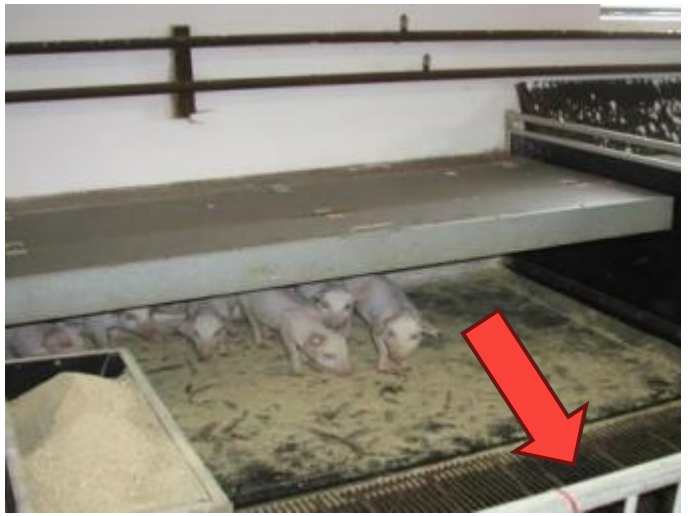


SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Sick pens – legal requirements

- Soft and dry bedding (straw/rubber mat)
  - 2/3 of the minimum area.
- Access to extra heating
- **Cooling facilities**
- No draft
- Fresh water and food
- Comply with legal area requirements
- (Keeping of sick journals)





SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Sick pens – legal requirements

- Soft and dry bedding (straw/rubber mat)
  - 2/3 of the minimum area.
- Access to extra heating
- Cooling facilities
- **No draft**
- **Fresh water and food**
- Comply with legal area requirements
- (Keeping of sick journals)

Svinevet Aarhede 2026

Drikkekopper - Vandforsyning til smågrise, søer og slagtesvin Skal ny kontrakt på grisefoder være kort eller lang? - LandbrugsAvisen

Sick pens – area requirements

Table 1: Freely accessible pen area, m^2/animal

Animal Group	One animal in the pen, m^2/animal	Several animals in the pen, m^2/animal
Sows and gilts	3,50	2,80
7-15 kg	0,41	0,36
15-30 kg	0,69	0,58
30-60 kg	1,14	0,91
60-100 kg	1,70	1,29
100-130 kg	2,05	1,53
130-150 kg	2,28	1,69

The term refers to the freely accessible floor area in the sick pen; any space taken up by feeders, troughs, or fixtures is excluded from the calculation.

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

Modified material from svineproduktion.dk

When it's challenging

If there have been problems in the "klima" stable

- How can/do you handle it in the slaughter pig unit?

If there is a major outbreak of biting

- Are there enough sick pens available?

SvineVet Årsmøde 2026

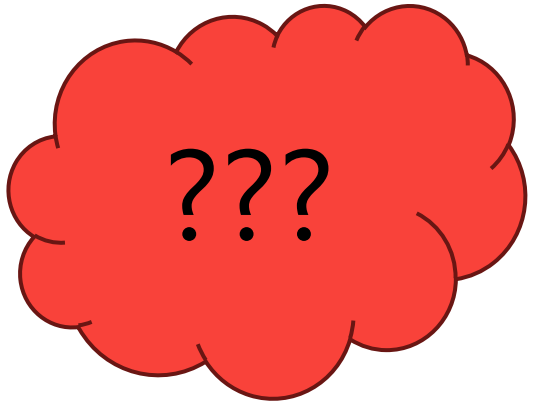
Key takeaway

- It is possible to produce pigs with intact tails
- Commitment is required by everyone involved
- Facilities need to be perfect
- Rooting and enrichment materials should be available
- Good and enough sick pens is needed!

- BUT outbreaks of tail biting might still happen

Svinevet Årsmøde 2026

Questions



SvineVet Årsmøde 2026