
**Abstract**

The behaviour of 50 puppies of traditionally docked breeds was recorded during and after the procedure of tail docking at the University of Queensland Companion Animal Veterinary Hospital. The behaviours were recorded at the time of the procedure and then in 5 second intervals for the first minute followed by 10 second intervals until the pup settled to sleep. All puppies vocalized intensely (“shrieking”) at the time of amputation of the tail, averaging 24 shrieks (range of 5 to 33). The average number of minor vocalizations (“whimpers”) made during docking was 18 (range of 2 to 46). There were no shrieks recorded during the recovery period. The average number of whimpers made during the first 30 s after completion of the amputation was 3 (range of 0 to 18). There was a significant (p I 0.001) reduction in the number of shrieks and whimpers emitted by pups in the 30 second period following docking. On average, the pups ceased vocalizing 138 s after docking (range of 5 to 840 s). Significant correlation coefficients were found between the time taken to stop vocalizing and the number of whimpers during docking ($r = 0.409$) and total vocalizations during docking ($r = 0.393$). That is, the more vocalizations made during docking, the longer the pup took to settle in the recovery period. The pups varied in the time taken to settle to sleep with a mean settling time of 3 min (range of 35 s to 14 min). Although it is difficult to objectively quantify the stress experienced by puppies undergoing tail docking, observations recorded during this study suggest that the animals do experience pain. The pain appears to be short-lived (with all puppies quiescent by a maximum of 15 min). Further research into the issue of pain in pups undergoing tail docking is recommended to determine whether the procedure should continue.

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