

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2006

RESOLUTION: 23 NOT APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE

SUBJECT MATTER: TAIL DOCKING OF DAIRY CATTLE

DATES: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, OCTOBER 12-18, 2006

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The practice of tail-docking in the dairy industry has developed primarily to avoid physical harm and contamination of workers during milking. A major concern has been the exposure of workers to manure and urine contaminated tail switches, primarily with parallel front exit discharge parlors where the milker must apply the milking machine from directly behind the animal.

The dairy industry appreciates the concerns of some individuals and organizations that raise animal welfare implications regarding tail-docking. The industry also recognizes that some studies indicate there is no benefit to routine tail-docking in cattle. However, such studies do not provide guidance to dairy producers who feel that tail-docking is necessary in their operations, such as the example cited above involving parallel front exit discharge parlors. Many practicing veterinarians also question if there is any real scientific basis to differentiate tail docking of dairy cattle from the tail-docking of other species of animals such as draft horses, sheep, pigs, and certain breeds of dogs such as Australian Shepherds.

The Animal Health Committee of the National Milk Producers Federation, encourage the United States Animal Health Association to adopt a position regarding tail-docking of dairy animals which accounts for milker safety and health, provides for best management guidance to minimize stress, endorses tail-docking under review and approval of the herd veterinarian, and takes into consideration the proper level of herd management necessary to enhance cow hygiene and sanitation.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) recognizes that the practice of tail-docking dairy animals may be necessary and desired to provide for human (i.e. milker) wellbeing, health, and safety.

USAHA urges that dairy producers who wish to employ tail-docking as a management tool do so under the oversight of a licensed veterinarian.