Finishing Farm Built in 2016
Rearing Pigs with Intact Tails
Point of production: Finishing
Country of origin: Finland

Tail biting can be regarded as a sign of boredom, insufficient stimulation and frustration that the environment is not sufficiently varied enough to satisfy exploratory motivations – it can result in damage and even cannibalism. Docking does not necessarily solve the problem. This aggressive behaviour leads also to important economic impacts in the pig industry. Tail lesions not only increase the risk of carcasses being condemned and trimmed, primarily because of abscesses, they are also associated with lower carcass weights.

Risk factors - Tail biting
Lack of adequate enrichment material - high stocking densities - competition for feed/water - inadequate diet (deficiencies of sodium or essential amino-acids) - poor health status - climate and ventilation conditions - animal characteristics (breed, genetics, gender) - social environment (herd size, mixing animals).

The solution - Best practice

The farm – Sikana Oy Farm. 2980 finishers, 10 pigs/pen with 1/3 slatted floor and 2/3 solid with heating.

Heating and ventilation - heating pipes at the wall and negative pressure ventilation.

Enrichment - Pens have two wood pieces as enrichment material and provided wood shavings 2 times/day.

Feed and water - The liquid feed consists of grain, barley, whey and supplements. It is supplied 5 times/day and the trough (30 cm/pig) is never totally empty. Feed consumption is checked daily and supply adjusted as needed. Pigs always have access to water that is quality analysed regularly. Water pressure is adjusted for finishers. Compartments are preheated and pens have some bedding material and electrolyte solution in troughs when piglets arrive.

Health status and biosecurity - high, SPF for enzootic pneumonia, atrophic rhinitis, mange, salmonella, PRRS and swine dysentery. The piggery is divided in two compartments with separate equipment. Boots are changed between compartments for biosecurity.

Time is won because the pigs do not require treatment. This takes approximately 15 seconds per pig. Average daily weight gain from 30 kg to slaughter was 1080 g/d for this pig farm, in Europe the average was 946 g/d.

The production cycle was 12.9 weeks for this farm, in Europe the average was 17.5 weeks.

- Extra space for the pigs: the space allowance in Finland is 0,9 m²/finisher compared to 0,65m² generally in the EU. So the cost are 1.38 times higher. The building cost is 757€/finisher, which is 841€/m² in the box.
- Negative pressure ventilation, this raises the energy costs by 20%.
- Pens have two pieces of chewable wooden activation toys: in Finland it costs 0,025€/pig.
- 2 x a day wood shavings are added as enrichment materials, cost is 1,25€/pig.
- Water analysis is done 2 to 4 times a year at a cost of 100€/analysis.

Further Research & Project Links
https://www.eupig.eu/
Link to technical report
Contact RPIG Finland: Taneli Tirkkonen

Points to consider and additional information
It is possible to keep pigs with long tails on a commercial farm, when combining high welfare status, extra space, good environment and frequent renewal of enrichment material. Use the various technical supports to know and evaluate the risk factors. Check the status of the various risk factors on your farm regularly. Novelty is an important attribute of an enrichment material. Ensure that these risk factors are addressed and then start reducing the number of tail docked pigs.