

**„Gute Zukunft für Ferkel und Bauer“**

**Tierwohl und Wirtschaftlichkeit verbinden**

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### **Castration of Piglets**

Castration of piglets has been discussed in the European Union for several years. It is obvious that the intervention as such creates pain and therefore animal welfare questions are raised on this topic.

On the other side it is also well known that male piglets are castrated to prevent the development of boar taint in the carcass.

In Denmark we already back in the 1980ies via research found a method to detect for boar taint on the slaughter line.

As a consequence of that we started up a production and marketing of meat from non-castrated male pigs primo the 1990ies. The reason was not only animal welfare but also environmental and economical.

When the Internal Market became a reality in 1993- and thereby also the production of meat from male pigs- we decided on a full scale production of male pigs i.e. around 50 % of the total Danish pig production. However a very important and decisive importer of pig meat from Denmark (Germany) introduced at governmental level an illegal ban on imports of meat from male pigs so the production inside one year totally collapsed.

Today most of the Danish piglets are castrated according to the EU-rules. (Before 7 days of age). Since June 2009, Danish legislation has required that all Danish producers administer an analgesic or pain relieving medication prior to castration taking place.

Our organisation together with a lot of other stakeholders (around 45) signed in December 2010 the European Declaration on alternatives to castration of piglets. The goal is to stop castration in 2018 if several conditions are met. The declaration is voluntary. An expert group of stakeholders has been created to implement the declaration.

Pigs for the production of “traditional products” like Parma ham will be exempted.

One of the main conditions is that solutions have to be found towards third country-markets so that market acceptance can be secured.

We have on our own made market surveys in 3-countries in that respect. I will comment on that in the following.

Another challenge that has to be solved is to find and agree on a common EU-method or a common reference method on the detection of boar taint.

The production of meat from male pigs in Denmark is very small due to our previous bad experience 25 years ago.

However as you surely know-the production of male pigs has over the last 5 years increased in Germany and Holland.

We are still doing research in the area of castration partly on our own partly together with our EU-partners. The Danish industry is urgently seeking a solution for the use of anaesthetic before castration is carried out and recently work has been intensified to examine the range of welfare issues affected. It is vital that the chosen solution is effective from a welfare perspective. In this connection it can be informed that the European Commission probably at the end of this year will publish research results on the use of anaesthesia in the EU.

The European Commission has several times stressed that it will not legislate on the question of castration.

The European Declaration is voluntary and therefore a voluntary solution has to be found between the European stakeholders i.e. producers, slaughterhouses, processing industry, retailers, consumers, researchers, animal welfare organisations etcetera.

It should however already be underlined today that the goal of stopping castration in 2018 will not be achieved.

The Danish pig meat industry is ready to find common solutions to the castration challenge. It is however a "condition sine qua non" that the whole European meat chain can agree to a common solution. Furthermore it is of paramount importance that third country markets are ready to accept the solution we might agree upon internally in the EU.

As a representative of the Danish pig meat industry I think the European Union can end up with a diversified form of production, hereunder increased biological production which also will include production of non-castrated male pigs. A total stop for castration is however not foreseeable in the near future.