




Section 7.8

Elective Husbandry Procedures

REFERENCED IN THIS SECTION:

Number/ Identifier	Name	Importance
 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE		
7.8	Elective Husbandry Procedures	Mandatory
 RECORD		
R-B	Training Record	Mandatory
 FACT SHEET		
F-15	Castration and Tail Docking	–

SECTION 7.8

ELECTIVE HUSBANDRY PROCEDURES

REQUIREMENTS

1. An **Elective Husbandry Procedures SOP (SOP 7.8)** must be developed and adequately implemented for castration, tail docking, ear notching, teeth clipping, tusk trimming, and minor on-farm surgeries, if applicable, and must include the following:
 - a. proof that the designated personnel have been trained
 - b. measures to ensure instruments are hygienic and kept sharp and well maintained
 - c. measures to ensure piglets are handled with care
 - d. a description of how each procedure performed on-farm is implemented
 - e. details of the equipment used to perform the procedure
 - f. additional requirements for specific procedures:
 - i. analgesics (pain control) must be used to control post-procedure pain from castration and tail docking
 - ii. anesthetic (loss of sensation) and analgesics must be used if piglets are castrated after 10 days of age
 - iii. if ear notching is being done, this procedure must be deemed necessary and performed before 14 days of age
 - iv. teeth clipping must be performed only when deemed necessary
 - v. if tusk trimming is performed, the pulp cavity must be avoided
 - vi. minor on-farm surgeries must be performed in consultation with a licensed veterinarian and using appropriate anesthesia and analgesics.

For your convenience, a template for the Elective Husbandry Procedure SOP (SOP 7.8) has been developed for you to use.

RATIONALE

- a. Failure to keep instruments clean and sharp can lead to infections (examples: *Salmonella*, circovirus, *Streptococcus suis*) and porcine epidemic diarrhea (PED) spreading among pigs, and to tissue deterioration.
- b. Failure to keep instruments clean and sharp can lead to swollen joints or the formation of abscesses and arthritis requiring medical care or carcass losses (excessive trimming) at the processing plant.
- c. It is crucial to use only tattoo ink that is approved for use in food animals to avoid chemical contamination of the carcass.
- d. An SOP or a set of SOPs for elective husbandry procedures is critical for proper training of employees to ensure that animals experience minimal stress, discomfort and pain during these procedures and are able to recover quickly to normal health and productivity.
- e. Male piglets are castrated to control “boar taint” and to reduce aggression and handling challenges associated with intact males. This may, in turn, decrease the risk of injuries to personnel and other pigs.
- f. The administration of analgesics during castration and tail docking helps to control post-procedure pain.
- g. Routine teeth clipping is less common than castration and tail docking. However, teeth clipping can help to reduce injury to littermates or the sow from “needle” teeth.

GUIDANCE

- a. **Definitions**
 - i. Analgesics (painkillers) reduce or eliminate pain.
 - ii. Anaesthetics cause the loss of sensation or consciousness.
- b. **Elective Husbandry Procedures**
 - i. Instruments used for elective husbandry procedures can be disinfected using alcohol or iodine.
 - ii. Inspect instruments regularly to ensure they are sharp and clean.
 - iii. Elective husbandry procedures such as castration, tail docking and tusk trimming can be painful for pigs.
 - iv. Minimizing stress, discomfort, and pain requires attention to protocols and equipment that enable personnel to perform such procedures with skill and care for the pigs' welfare.
- c. **Castration**
 - i. Immunization against boar taint, also known as immuno-castration, is an effective alternative to surgical castration. Check with your processing plant prior to adopting this practice to see if they accept immune-castrated animals.
 - ii. Production of intact males at lighter weights reduces boar taint, but does not guarantee its absence.
 - iii. See the Castration fact sheet for further details
- d. **Tail Docking**
 - i. Tail-biting can be triggered by a wide range or combination of factors, including overstocking, feed deficiencies, incorrect temperature levels, inadequate ventilation, drafts, high levels of dust and noxious gases such as ammonia, and lack of enrichment.
 - ii. Docking tails too short may lead to infections or prolapses. Docking tails too long is not effective at reducing tail-biting. Make sure your staff is trained.
 - iii. Tail-biting can result in serious wounds and bleeding as well as more severe consequences such as infection, spinal abscess, paralysis and, in extreme cases, death.
 - iv. Studies indicate that environmental enrichment (e.g., provision of straw) reduces the chance of tail-biting.
 - v. Tail docking is known to cause acute stress, as indicated by physiological and behavioural responses. Some pigs with docked tails may develop increased sensitivity and/or chronic pain in the region.
 - vi. The tail wound should be healed before weaning.
- e. **Ear Identification**
 - i. Identification methods include ear tags (with or without electronic transponders), ear tattoos, and ear notches.
 - ii. These identification methods cause stress in pigs, which may be reduced through refinement of equipment and techniques.
- f. **Teeth Clipping**
 - i. Typically, piglets start to use their teeth to compete with each other within the first 24 hours of birth. This is when the decision whether to clip the teeth of aggressive piglets needs to be made.
 - ii. If improperly performed, clipping teeth may cause discomfort to the piglet or an infection.
- g. **Tattooing**
 - i. Ensure that tattoo hammers are kept clean. After each use, they should be cleaned with soap and water to remove both ink and dirt, and they should be dried as thoroughly as possible.
- h. **Tusk Trimming**
 - i. Tusk trimming is rarely done on-farm. When deemed necessary, it is used to prevent boars from injuring other pigs or personnel. The procedure should remove the tip of the tusk only and should not affect the pulp cavity inside the tusk, which contains nerves and blood vessels.
 - ii. Boars do not need to be de-tusked as long as they are individually segregated in transport.
- i. **On-Farm Surgery**
 - i. In the event that a minor on-farm surgery (e.g., hernia or ridgeline repair) is required, guidance from a licensed veterinarian is critical.
 - ii. Major surgical procedures such as non-terminal caesarian section can be performed only by a licensed veterinarian.

AUDIT QUESTIONS

Q#	Audit Questions and Interpretation	Verification			
		Compliant	NC-Minor	NC-Major	N/A
Q7.8.1	Verify that an Elective Husbandry Procedure SOP has been developed for each procedure used on-farm and includes all required elements.	Full and partial validation: > SOP 7.8: Elective Husbandry Procedures			
	Have SOPs been developed for all elective husbandry procedures that are performed on-farm and do they include all required elements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q7.8.2	Verify that the Elective Husbandry Procedures SOP is adequately implemented on-farm. Ensure the measures listed in the SOP are followed. a. Verify that analgesics and anesthetics are found on-farm, when applicable. b. Verify the equipment used is well maintained. c. If a procedure is observed, verify whether it complies with the SOP.	Full and partial validation: > SOP 7.8: Elective Husbandry Procedures > observation (full validation only, if applicable) > interview			
	Are the SOPs for elective husbandry procedures adequately implemented?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

N/A = not applicable; SOP = standard operating procedure



LEVELS OF COMPLIANCE – EXAMPLES

COMPLIANT

- > The Elective Husbandry Procedures SOP are available. The SOP addresses all required elements.
- > There is evidence that the Elective Husbandry Procedures SOP is being adequately implemented.

MINOR NON-COMPLIANCE **Timeline: 12 months**

- > The Elective Husbandry Procedures SOP is incomplete or not available.

MAJOR NON-COMPLIANCE **Timeline: 60 days**

- > There is evidence that elective husbandry procedures are being conducted using unacceptable practices and pigs are being negatively impacted.