

***Interim Progress Report of the  
Irish Working Terrier Committee  
in relation to the  
Prophylactic Tail Docking and  
Dew Claw removal for Working Dogs***



***These guidelines to be read in conjunction with***

*Animal Health & Welfare Bill 2013 (R.O.I.)*

*and Relative Statutory Instruments (pending)*

*Veterinary Practice (Amendment) Act 2012*

*Animal Welfare of Animals Act 2011 (Northern Ireland)*

*The Welfare of Animals (Docking of Working Dogs' Tails*

*and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 -*

*Northern Ireland Statutory Rules 2012, No. 387*

*The Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons)*

*Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 -*

*Northern Ireland Statutory Rules 2012, No. 153 Schedule 8*

*The Docking of Working Dogs Tails (England) Regulations 2007, Statutory Instruments 1120*

***June 2013***

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## **1.0 Document Overview**

The purpose of this document is to clearly describe the procedure for prophylactic tail docking and dewclaw removal of working terriers. Affiliated working terrier club members shall review this document and be fully competent with the procedure requirements.

### **1.1 Procedure Reference Documents**

- *Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013 (R.O.I.) and Relative Statutory Instruments (Pending)*
- *Veterinary Practice (Amendment) Act 2012*
- *Welfare of Animals Act 2011 (Northern Ireland)*
- *The Welfare of Animals (Docking of Working Dogs' Tails and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 – Northern Ireland Statutory Rules 2012, No. 387*
- *The Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 – Northern Ireland Statutory Rules 2012, No. 153 Schedule 8*
- *Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons update on dewclaw removal (10 May 2013)*
- *The Docking of Working Dogs Tails (England) Regulations 2007, Statutory Instruments 1120*

## **2.0 The Necessity to Dock Working Terriers**

Prophylactic docking (or tail shortening) is undertaken on welfare grounds across a range of working dogs. This includes certain terrier and gundog breeds used in connection with shooting, falconry, hunting and pest control.

The procedure is carried out in order to minimise and prevent the risk of tail injuries whilst the dogs are working above ground in dense cover and in the case of working terriers also whilst working below ground. It's carried out in order to minimise the risk of far more major surgery at a later date.

### **2.1 Tail Injuries**

Tail injuries to undocked working dogs are extremely distressing and deeply painful. They can take a considerable time to heal, do continue to reoccur and in some instances may require part of the tail to be amputated under anaesthetic. This has significant negative welfare implications when compared to a relatively minor procedure which is routinely carried out without any need for anaesthesia at around 72-120 hours after the puppy is born.

### **2.2 Working Terriers are at Greatest Risk of Sustaining Tail Injuries**

The case for the need to dock working terriers is far greater than with any other type of dog. The risk of their sustaining tail injuries is much higher and the nature of their injuries more acute. These much smaller dogs not only work above ground alongside the more traditional gundog breeds and fulfil a similar role, but are also required to locate and flush pests from below ground.

Above ground (by virtue of their much smaller size) working terriers seek out and pursue their quarry in the densest cover where other larger breeds cannot reach. Because the cover is denser they are at far greater risk of sustaining tail injuries. Being terriers they pursue their quarry in a most determined manner and the risk of incurring tail injuries is further exacerbated by their natural behaviour, which is to bark repeatedly at the quarry whilst in pursuit and to “flick” or “wag” their tail from side to side. The closer they are to their quarry, then the more vigorous is their tail action.

Below ground the working terrier fulfils a significantly different, more specialised and entirely unique role, that of locating and flushing pest/quarry species which live or seek refuge below ground. This takes place in underground tunnels, in amongst stones and rock piles, and in manmade structures above ground such as rubbish piles and tips. The terrier's role is to seek out the quarry, indicate to its handler where the quarry is located and to cause it to leave. It achieves this by barking continually at the quarry once located. Throughout the entire process the terrier's tail is "wagging" or "flicking" from side to side, again the closer it gets to its quarry then the more vigorously it wags its tail.

A correctly shortened tail is protected from injury by its position on the body, its relative length when compared to the width of the dog's hind quarters and the size of the hole or gap through which the terrier's body can pass. Nevertheless it is not uncommon for a terrier to wear away the hair at the end of its tail when working below ground, even if correctly docked. Were the terrier's tail any longer it would be continually beating against the sides of the hole, roots, rocks and all other obstructions encountered, and result in significant tail injuries.

Proportionally a two inch tear or injury to the tail of a work terrier weighing some twelve to fourteen pounds is a far more significant and difficult injury for either the dog or its owner to deal with, than for example a similar sized injury on one of the much larger traditional gundog breeds weighing some thirty to forty five pounds.

### **2.3 Working Terriers – Eligible Breeds/Types**

The working terrier has evolved over many hundreds of years for Pest Control purposes. It consists of a number of different but clearly identifiable types. These are commonly known as:

- The Fell Terrier (a generic name for the Lakeland and Patterdale terriers).
- The Jack Russell Terrier.
- The Plummer Terrier (a derivative of the Jack Russell Terrier).
- The Working Sealyham Terrier (a derivative of the Jack Russell Terrier).
- Cross breeds of the above.

The above are all currently docked. They are not registered with the Kennel Club, nor are they eligible for registration, being a completely separate "working breed" from those which are exhibited. Under no circumstances shall a terrier which is not intended for working use be docked.

### **2.4 Tail Docking (Caudectomy) Implementation**

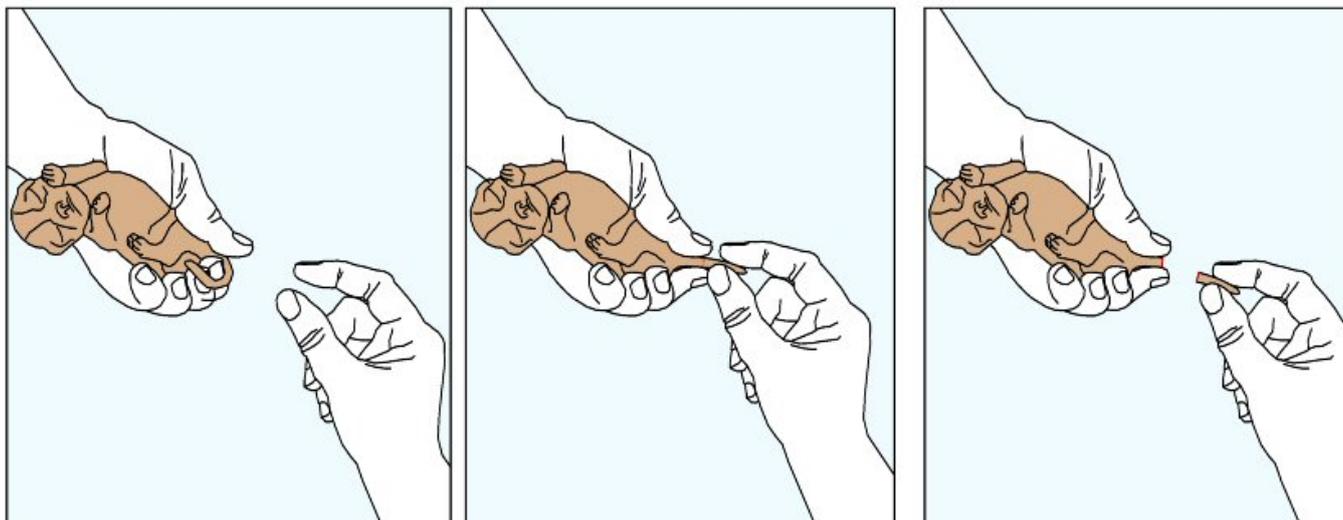
The health of each pup shall be assessed prior to commencing this procedure to ensure all pups and dam are of sound health. The procedure itself is a relatively minor task. It is carried out by experienced trained terriermen and shall take place approximately 72-120 hours after the puppy is born. Experienced terriermen from each IWTF Affiliated Clubs are trained by an I.W.T.F. Representative in prophylactic tail docking. So minor is the nature of this procedure that it is carried out without the need for any form of anaesthetic and it is normal for the puppy to immediately resume suckling on the mother within seconds as if nothing had occurred.

The pup to be docked is carefully placed on its back by the terrierman in one hand and along his upturned underarm. With his free hand he straightens the pup's tail and selects the correct length of the tail between his thumb and index finger. The terriermen gently feels between the separating cartilage and hold firm the remaining section of the tail between his thumb and index finger whilst the pup lays on it backs on the terriermans underarm and tucked gently into the terriermans waist to ensure the pup is secure. Remove the tail using a quick and clean method of separation.

As the nerves, muscle and bone structure in the pups tail is not fully formed no stress is exerted on the pup. The entire process takes approximately **2-3 seconds** from start to finish. Any implements used shall be thoroughly sterilised prior to use.

A quick application of a skin treatment solution (Example brine) and the pup is returned to the mother for immediate suckling. Bedding should be cleaned at least twice daily to ensure cleanliness of the environment. Once performed, this procedure provides a lifetime's protection against far more serious injuries.

### Tail Docking Diagram



- Benefits of this method are the pup remains with the mother eliminating stress on both the mother and pups from separation by visits to Vets or unnecessarily moving new dam with pups to Vets office.
- No additional and unnecessary risk of contagion of canine viruses or parasites that may be contacted in veterinary practices by pups or dam.
- All implements are thoroughly sterilised prior to use.
- Never once over many decades and thousands of procedures has a pup required further attention by a Vet in relation to post procedure complications.
- Only "Working" Terriers are eligible for Docking. Non working "show" terriers shall not be docked by IWTF Affiliated terriermen. To do so would incur disciplinary procedures and or expulsion from the IWTF.
- Only terriermen with a minimum of 5 years experience with Working Terriers shall be eligible for training and awarded an accredited training certificate by the IWTF Committee. i.e. a Competence Cert.

### 3.0 Dewclaw Removal Implementation

Dewclaws (commonly referred to as a Dog's thumb) are a vestigial digit on the foot of many mammals, birds, and reptiles. It commonly grows high on the leg so that in *digitigrade species*, when the dog is standing, it does not make contact with the ground and therefore in dogs does not get worn comparable to same way that the nails on their other toes do, from contact with the ground. Dewclaws in working dogs are removed in young puppies prior to their eyes opening, typically 72-120 hours old.

Dogs almost always have dewclaws on the inside of the front legs and occasionally also on the hind legs. Unlike front dewclaws, rear dewclaws tend to have little bone or muscle structure in most breeds. Sometimes some dogs will even have more than one dewclaw on the same paw; at least one of these dewclaws will be poorly connected to the leg and in this case it is often removed. When a dog has extra dewclaws in addition to the usual one on each front leg, the dog is said to be double dewclawed. However, in many dogs the dewclaws never make contact with the ground; in this case, the dewclaw's nail never wears away, and it is then often removed in the dogs' best interest and welfare to keep it from embedding in the dogs soft tissue.

Dewclaws are a weak digit, barely attached to the leg, so that they can rip partway off or easily catch on something and break, which can be extremely painful and prone to infection. This is, more likely for hunting dogs, which can sometimes tear the dewclaw while running in overgrown vegetation or working in the sub-terrain.

#### 3.1 Rear Dewclaws

Canids have four claws on the rear feet, although some domestic dog breeds or individuals have an additional claw. A more technical term for this fifth claw on the rear legs is *hind-limb-specific preaxial polydactyl*. Several genetic mechanisms can cause rear dewclaws; they involve the LMBR1 gene and related parts of the genome. Rear dewclaws often have no phalanx bones and are attached by skin only and it is a quite simple procedure to remove.

#### Dew Claw Removal Diagram



The health of each pup shall be assessed prior to commencing this procedure to ensure all pups and dam are of sound health. All implements used shall be thoroughly sterilised prior to use. A quick application of a skin treatment solution (Example brine) and the pup is returned to the mother for immediate suckling. Bedding should be cleaned at least twice daily to ensure cleanliness of the environment. Once performed, this procedure provides a lifetime's protection against far more serious injuries.

- Dewclaw removal may be recommended if the dewclaw is deformed or if extra dewclaws are present.
- Dewclaw removal is recommended for hunting or working dogs or if there is a risk of trauma to the toe.
- Dewclaw removal is frequently performed before pups eyes are open (between 72 and 120 hours old).
- Pups recover very well following dewclaw removal.
- Dewclaw removal is an acceptable practice for laypersons by the R.C.V.S.

#### **4.0 Procedure Conclusion**

It is our firm belief and certain knowledge that an outright ban on tail docking & dewclaw removal would have had severe negative welfare implications for working terriers, along with a number of other working breeds. This fact was further recognised by both the English Parliament and the Welsh Assembly and Northern Ireland Assembly who, based upon animal welfare considerations, exempted working terriers from their recent tail docking ban and dewclaw removal. Dewclaw removal is a recognised practice for laypersons over 18 by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

By training suitably experienced affiliated IWTF club terriermen in compliance with section 54A of the *Veterinary Practice Act* having relevant experience with working terriers to implement these minor procedures within a pre-prescribed time period, enables IWTF members ensure that the welfare of their pups and dam are maintained to the highest standards throughout their working lives. The IWTF and our members continually endeavour meet or exceed international best practice in regards to animal welfare.

The I.W.T.F. was formed when all the working terrier clubs in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland joined together to form a single umbrella organisation. Our main aim being to promote and advance the most humane and efficient practices associated with working terriers.

Through its Codes of Conduct, Detailed Guidelines and Procedures, the I.W.T.F. has singly promoted best standards of welfare and accountability in terrier work nationally and internationally.

I.W.T.F. affiliated club members are primarily involved with the breeding and working of terriers which are used for pest control and other related field sports activities, working with hound packs, including shooting clubs, gamekeepers and local farmers.

It is an indication of their, and previous generations, skill, dedication and concern regarding the future well being of the working breeds that the modern day working terrier displays none of the hereditary faults which are so commonplace in so many other breeds today.

## IRISH WORKING TERRIER FEDERATION

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Postal Address: Irish Working Terrier Federation, 13 Upper Baggot Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Dublin 4  
Email (ROI): [chairman@iwtf.ie](mailto:chairman@iwtf.ie) Website: [www.iwtf.ie](http://www.iwtf.ie)



### IRISH WORKING TERRIER FEDERATION PROPHYLACTIC TAIL DOCKING TRAINING FORM (FOR WORKING DOGS)

#### Eligible Working Terriers – Breeds/Types.

Prophylactic docking (or tail shortening) is undertaken on welfare grounds across a range of working terrier breeds used in connection with shooting, falconry, hunting and pest control.

The procedure is carried out in order to minimise and prevent the risk of tail injuries whilst the working terriers are working above ground in dense cover and also whilst working below ground. It's carried out in order to minimise the risk of far more major surgery at a later date.

The working terrier has evolved over many hundreds of years for Pest Control purposes. It consists of a number of different but clearly identifiable types. These are commonly known as:

- The Fell Terrier (a generic name for the Lakeland and Patterdale terriers).
- The Jack Russell Terrier.
- The Plummer Terrier (a derivative of the Jack Russell Terrier).
- The Working Sealyham Terrier (a derivative of the Jack Russell Terrier).
- Cross breeds of the above.

#### Personnel Eligibility (Affiliated I.W.T.F. Club Members Only)

The procedure itself is a relatively minor task. It is carried out by experienced trained terriermen and shall take place approximately 72-120 hours after the puppy is born. Only Experienced terriermen from I.W.T.F. Affiliated Clubs who are trained prophylactic tail docking procedure with relevant experience in working terriers are eligible for training. Persons must be over the age of eighteen to implement this procedure. Eligible persons must have a current IWTF membership card which is renewed annually.

#### Procedure Implementation

The health of each pup shall be assessed prior to commencing this procedure to ensure all pups and dam are of sound health. The pup to be docked is placed on its back by the terrierman in one hand and along his upturned underarm. With his free hand he straightens the pup's tail and selects the correct length of the tail between his thumb and index finger. The terriermen gently feels between the separating cartilage and hold firm the remaining section of the tail between his thumb and index finger whilst the pup lays on it backs on the terriermans underarm and tucked gently into the terriermans waist to ensure the pup is secure. Remove the tail using a quick and clean method of separation. As the nerves, muscle and bone structure in the pups tail is not fully formed no stress is exerted on the pup. The entire process takes approximately **2-3 seconds** from start to finish. A quick application of a skin treatment solution (Example brine) and the pup is returned to the mother for immediate suckling. Bedding should be cleaned twice daily to ensure cleanliness of the environment and pups monitored for a period of 5 days. Once performed, this procedure provides a lifetime's protection against far more serious injuries.

I (IWTF Affiliated Club Representative) have relevant experience with Working Terriers and I am over the age of eighteen. I have been adequately trained by experienced I.W.T.F. Terriermen in the procedure of Tail Docking for prophylactic purposes and confirm that only working pups shall be docked.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliated Club Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_



**IRISH WORKING TERRIER FEDERATION  
CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE**

**(Date Issued: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012)**

This is to certify the following is a Full Member Club of the Irish Working Terrier Federation and has received training in prophylactic tail docking and is competent to carry out this procedure.

The person named below is empowered to act as that Club or Association's "*Representative of the Irish Working Terrier Federation*" in accordance with the requirements of the Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013 working dog tail docking exemption.

**WESTMEATH WORKING TERRIER CLUB**

**I.W.T.F. REPRESENTATIVE**

**MR SAM MAGUIRE**

**Westmeath Working Terrier Club**

**1 Main Street,**

**Moate, Co. Westmeath**

**Signed:** *Gerard O'Donoghue*

**Ger O'Donoghue (Chairman I.W.T.F.)**

**IRISH WORKING TERRIER FEDERATION**

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Updated 10 May 2013

## Removal of dew claws

### Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966

27.1 The removal of dew claws amounts to the practice of veterinary surgery and therefore can, as a general rule, only be carried out by a veterinary surgeon. Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, however, **allows anyone of or over the age of 18 to amputate the dew claws of a dog, before its eyes are open.**

27.2 The Veterinary Surgeons Act applies to the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).

### Animal Welfare Legislation

27.3 In the United Kingdom, animal welfare legislation prohibits the mutilation of animals, but subject to certain exceptions laid down in regulations.

### Animal Welfare Act 2006

27.4 In England, Schedules 1 and 9 to the Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/1100) state that the removal of dew claws is a permitted procedure with the condition that 'an anaesthetic must be administered except where the dog is a puppy whose eyes have not yet opened'.

27.5 In Wales, Schedules 1 and 9 to the Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (Wales) Regulations 2007 (WSI 2007/1029) state that the removal of dew claws is a permitted procedure with the condition that 'an anaesthetic must be administered except where the dog is a puppy whose eyes have not yet opened'

### Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006

27.6 In Scotland, Schedule 9 of the Prohibited Procedures on Protected Animals (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 2007 (SSI 2007/256) states that the amputation of dew claws is an exempted procedure and may be carried out for the purpose of general animal management. The Protection of Animals (Anaesthetic) Act 1954 continues to apply in Scotland and provides that anaesthetic must be administered except for 'the amputation of the dew claws of a dog before its eyes are open'.

### Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

27.7 In Northern Ireland, Schedule 8 of the Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (NISR 2012/153) states that the removal of the dew claws of dogs is a permitted procedure which may be carried out as a management procedure by lay persons but may only be carried out before the pups eyes are open. Otherwise, the removal of the dew claws of dogs is a prohibited procedure and may only be carried out by a veterinary surgeon.

## **What are a dog's dew claws?**

27.8 Colloquially, dew claw refers to the first digit on the hind limb and the first digit on the fore limb.

27.9 Anatomically, the dew claw is defined as the first digit of the hind limb. Dew claws (hind limb) are very variable in their occurrence, ranging from complete absence to a fully formed digit with skeletal components; most consist of a nail, skin and connective tissue with no skeletal articulation. Such a vestigial structure is certainly very vulnerable to damage through catching on vegetation; therefore, there is a good argument for removal of dew claws before five days of age.

27.10 Anatomically, the first digit of the fore limb is not a dew claw. Generally, the first digit of the fore limb is fully formed and has an important function. Not surprisingly dogs are often seen to use these ' thumbs ' exactly as you would expect -- to help grasp food and other objects because they can be adducted, flexed or extended like any other digit, due to the bony articulation and the muscle attachments.

27.11 Legislation has not defined dew claws and ultimately, it is for the courts to decide the meaning of dew claws applying to any specific legislation.

## **Conclusion**

**27.12 The removal of the first digit of the hind limb (true dew claws) is justified in most circumstances.**

27.13 The removal of first digit of the fore limb is justified only if, in the veterinary surgeon's professional opinion, the particular anatomy/appearance of the digits invites possible damage.