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Paper

Survey of tail injuries sustained by working gundogs and terriers in Scotland

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Abstract

Working dog owners in Scotland were invited to take part in an internet survey regarding the 2010/2011 shooting season, which was designed to estimate the prevalence of tail injuries; assess the risk of tail injuries in docked and undocked working dogs; and identify risk factors for owner-reported tail injuries. Of 2860 working dogs, 13.5 per cent sustained at least one tail injury during the 2010/2011 shooting season. Undocked spaniels and hunt point retrievers (HPRs) were at greatest risk of tail injury with 56.6 per cent of undocked spaniels and 38.5 per cent of undocked HPRs sustaining at least one tail injury during the season. There was no statistically significant difference in the risk of tail injury in dogs with tails docked by one-third, half or shorter. To prevent one tail injury in one shooting season, between two and 18 spaniels or HPRs would need to be docked as puppies. The authors believe that this work provides the best available evidence on which to base a consultation for changes to the legislation on tail docking in working dogs in Scotland. Docking the tails of HPRs and spaniels by one-third would significantly decrease the risk of tail injury sustained while working in these breeds.

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