

Docking of dogs

The law regarding the docking of dogs' tails changed in Wales on 28th March 2007, in England on 6th April 2007 and in Scotland on 30th April 2007. Apart from the fact that the legislation came into effect slightly earlier in Wales, the law will be the same for both England and Wales. Throughout the UK dogs may only be docked by a veterinary surgeon whatever method of docking is used. Docking for therapeutic reasons, such as injury, may be undertaken by a vet on any dog at any time. Docking for prophylactic reasons (i.e. to prevent disease) may only be performed before the puppy is a week old.

England and Wales

It is legal for a veterinary surgeon to dock a puppy of specified breeds (the breeds are different for England and Wales) from a working bitch. The criteria for 'working' are essentially: working to the gun; as a terrier; or for the police or other government agency. Dogs docked as working dogs must be permanently identified with a microchip and must have a certificate from the veterinary surgeon who docked the puppy. Any dog docked after the legislation came into force must have a certificate. Irrespective of where they were docked, they may not be shown at shows in England and Wales where the public is charged a fee for admission. However if the competition is on the ability of the dogs, such as field trials or agility, docked dogs may compete.

Scotland

It is illegal to dock a puppy or to remove it from the country to have it docked elsewhere. However if they were docked legally either in England, Wales, Northern Ireland or abroad they may be shown at any show in Scotland.

Northern Ireland

There is currently no relevant legislation in Northern Ireland.

