**Application:** For progress to be made towards reducing Ireland's reliance on routine tail docking to control tail biting, farmers' perspectives and business viability must be taken into account by key industry stakeholders and policy makers.

**Introduction:** The routine tail docking of piglets less than a week of age is standard practice on commercial farms in Ireland despite being prohibited in EU and Irish law (D'Eath et al., 2016). Tail docking is performed to reduce tail biting later in life. However, the prevalence of tail biting is influenced by a range of on-farm risk factors, and tail docking alone does not completely eliminate the occurrence of tail biting (Nielsen et al., 2022). A free tail biting risk assessment service has been developed by the Irish government, service providers and researchers (TASAH Tail Biting Risk Factor Assessment). However, the implementation of changes at farm level that lead to a decrease in the risk has been poor. A human behavior change approach has been suggested to help address the issue of tail biting in pigs (Carroll & Groarke, 2019).

**Material and methods:** A qualitative study was used to investigate why farmers continue to routinely tail dock. One-on-one semi-structured interviews (n =18) were conducted with farrow to finish pig farm owners and managers between March – June 2024 until data saturation was reached. Farmers were recruited through the Animal Health Ireland database and approached at pig farming events. The interview questions were designed to encompass the components of the COM-B (Capability-Opportunity-Motivation = Behavior) and Theoretical Domains Frameworks (Michie et al., 2011). The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by a transcription company, checked and pseudonymised. A largely deductive framework approach was used to analyze the transcripts (Goldsmith, 2021). Using NVivo software, codes were mapped to the aforementioned frameworks and then refined. The common themes that emerged within the COM-B-based framework components were used in the Behavior Change Wheel to identify appropriate interventions.

**Results and Discussion**: Of the three COM-B components, a lack of physical opportunities in terms of financial, environmental and temporal resources emerged as some of the most common barriers pig farmers faced concerning stopping routine docking. Secondly, farmers lacked the motivation to cease docking; they viewed it as a necessary procedure for the pigs’ welfare, saw little benefit to stopping and feared the potential negative consequences if they stopped in a system not designed for undocked pigs. Farmers’ beliefs of theirs and the industry’s capability to rear undocked pigs were variable. Capability was a less frequently mentioned barrier, some farmers were confused about why the law exists and is being enforced and felt they would need more advice and training about how to successfully rear undocked pigs. The changes required to facilitate rearing pigs with undocked tails also varied between farms, but all farmers mentioned financial viability as an absolute necessity. Identifying science-backed, realistic solutions for Irish pig farms and the need for appropriate infrastructure to be in place prior to the commencement of any stronger enforcement were also major themes. Farmers’ suggestions involved changing the pigs' housing, management, feeding practices and genetics. Interventions, for example to enable and incentivize farmers, have been suggested to help overcome the barriers identified and increase compliance with legislation.

**Conclusions:** This study has provided an authentic insight into Irish pig farmers' perspectives around routine docking. It has highlighted the significant barriers farmers face concerning ceasing docking and the potential changes necessary to facilitate rearing undocked pigs. The results indicate that huge alterations to the current structure of the industry, the market for pig meat and stakeholders’ mindsets would be necessary for not docking to become a reality. Policy makers should use farmers’ suggestions to guide future incremental steps towards making those big changes.

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