



News

Majority of regular pork buying Americans show concern for pig welfare, hold retailers responsible to end what are seen by many as objectionable practices, a new Harris Poll reports

Americans across a broad sweep of demographics, including household income, are more likely to buy pork from retailers committed to ending the use of gestation crates and tail docking

January 12 2021 New York, NY – Across different incomes, genders, age or race, many regular pork buying Americans (defined as those who purchase pork at least 2-3 times per month) find the use of gestation crates on pregnant pigs (66%) and the practice of tailing docking on piglets (53%) objectionable. These findings, and other key sentiments, are from a [recent survey](#) of over 2,000 US adults conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of [World Animal Protection](#), a global animal welfare nonprofit organization, and farmed animal welfare non-profit, [Crate Free Illinois](#). The survey examined opinions and buying behaviors around common practices used by pork producers and showed concern around farmed animal welfare runs high and is not limited to one type of buyer.

According to the survey, gestation crates¹ are seen as unacceptable by two-thirds of Americans (66%), and a strong majority (73%) are more likely to buy pork products from companies committed to ending their use than from one that is not. Tail docking² is also seen as unacceptable by just over half (56%) of Americans, and 62% of Americans think retailers and restaurants have a responsibility to ensure the cutting of piglet tails is not done by their pork producers.

These findings sound a cautionary alarm to retailers that they can better serve their pork customers, and improve brand perception, by committing now to end the use of gestation crates and tail docking.

“It is encouraging to see such strong concern among the public for the animals raised for our food. It is clear that companies cannot continue to bury their heads in the sand and must make progress on animal welfare to remain competitive,” said Cameron Harsh, Farming Campaign Manager, World Animal Protection, US. “In fact, a majority of regular pork buyers are more likely to change buying behavior based on a company’s commitments. The pork industry has continued to fight unsuccessfully against the protections for pigs set by Proposition 12 in California. But this survey clearly shows that demand for stronger protections is not unique to California or any one region; the country as a whole will no longer accept these cruel practices.”

"This survey teaches us that the desire for more humanely raised pork products is important to shoppers across many income levels and backgrounds, and they're willing to change their buying behavior accordingly," said Jessica Chipkin, Founder and President of Crate Free Illinois. "This is an important learning for the cost-conscious retailers who are slow to commit to ending these practices because they feel it is not relevant for their customer base. We've long felt that eating more humanely raised products should not be a privilege reserved for higher income groups. Hopefully, these findings motivate more retailers to mandate their pork suppliers meet higher animal welfare standards."

¹ See notes to editor

² See notes to editor

Key Findings from the poll:

- **Use of gestation crates can impact sales and sentiments toward retailers/restaurants.** Three-quarters of Americans (75%) say retailers and restaurants that sell pork products have a responsibility to ensure the use of gestation crates for pregnant pigs are not used by their pork suppliers. A strong majority of Americans (73%) would be more likely to buy pork products from companies committed to ending the confinement of pregnant pigs than from one that is not, including 70% of household incomes <\$50k, 66% of household incomes between \$50k to \$74.9K, and 77% of household incomes between \$75k-99.9k, and 76% of household incomes \$100k or more.
- **Americans want crate-free pork and are willing to pay for it.** Roughly two thirds of Americans (65%) would be willing to pay more for pork if the company selling the products has committed to ending the use of gestation crates. This concern cuts across all income levels, with 51% of household incomes <\$25k, 65% of household incomes between \$25K – \$49.9k, 60% of household incomes between \$50k – \$74.9k, 77% of household incomes between \$75k – \$99.9k and 69% of household incomes \$100k or more concurring.
- **Cutting tails off of piglets widely viewed as unacceptable.** More than half of Americans (56%) view tail docking of piglets as an unacceptable practice, including 66% with a household income < \$25k, 55% with a household income between \$25k – \$49.9k and 68% with a household income between \$50k – \$74.9k, 58% with a household income between \$75k-99.9k and 48% with a household income of \$100k+.
- **Ceasing tail docking could boost perceptions and purchasing.** More than 3 in 5 Americans (62%) feel pork sellers have a duty to stop their suppliers from tail docking their piglets. Most Americans (61%) would be more likely to purchase pork products from companies that are committed to ending the practice than from one that is not, including 56% of household incomes <\$25K, 57% of household incomes between \$25k-\$49.9k, 67% of household incomes between \$50k-\$74.9k, and 59% of household incomes \$75k+.
- **Regular pork buyers seek out higher welfare products.** Many Americans who purchase pork at least two to three times a month also stand firm on animal welfare. 79% of regular pork buyers would be more likely to buy pork products from a company committed to ending the confinement of pregnant pigs than from one that is noncommittal, and 71% would be willing to pay more if the company selling the products has committed to eliminate gestation crates. This sentiment also holds true for tail docking with 61% of regular pork buyers saying they would be willing to pay more for pork products from a company committed to ending the cutting of piglet tails.

– ENDS –

Notes to editors:

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Text shown to respondents for gestation crates:

In an effort to maximize profitability pork producers use gestation crates, a metal enclosure in which a pregnant pig used for breeding is typically kept for her entire pregnancy and which is slightly larger than her body. This type of housing system allows producers to maximize floor space of a barn and house as many animals as possible. It also reduces labor costs as crate confinement means fewer workers are needed to sight-inspect all of the animals and monitor or limit feed intake.

Gestation crates contain no bedding material and are instead floored with slatted plastic, concrete or metal to allow waste to be efficiently collected below. This waste is then flushed into open-air pits known as lagoons. The pigs are not able to socialize with one another, exhibit natural behaviors, or turn around fully.

² Text shown to respondents for piglet tail docking:

A commonly used procedure on farms is tail docking of piglets. During this procedure piglets tails are cut off close to the body using a cauterizing blade, clippers, or pliers. Tail docking is done when pigs are young, typically without anesthesia. This is performed as one strategy to reduce tail biting among pigs housed together.

About the survey

This online survey was conducted within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of World Animal Protection and Crate Free Illinois from September 29 – October 1, 2020 among 2,022 adults ages 18 and older, among whom 1,029 were assigned to answer questions about gestation crates and 1,035 were assigned to answer questions about piglet tail docking.

Results were weighted for age within gender, region, race/ethnicity, income, education, and size of household where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population. For complete survey details [click here](#).

About World Animal Protection

World Animal Protection has moved the world to protect animals for more than 50 years. World Animal Protection works to give animals a better life. The organization's activities include working with companies to ensure high standards of welfare for the animals in their care; working with governments and other stakeholders to prevent wild animals being cruelly traded, trapped or killed; and saving the lives of animals and the livelihoods of the people who depend on them in disaster situations.

World Animal Protection influences decision-makers to put animal welfare on the global agenda and inspires people to change animals' lives for the better. More information on World Animal Protection can be found at: <http://www.worldanimalprotection.us/>

About Crate Free Illinois

Since its founding in 2015, Crate Free Illinois has worked to reduce the suffering of animals on industrialized farms. From working with companies to end the extreme confinement of farmed animals in the supply chain to advocating for sustainable local farmers, Crate Free Illinois educates and engages consumers to hold stakeholders accountable for the welfare of the animals they profit from. Crate Free Illinois is a 501(c)3 animal welfare organization that supports reducing meat consumption, rejecting all factory farm products, or replacing meat with plant-based diets. Learn more at <http://www.CrateFreeIL.org>.

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