



Northeast Organic Farming Association  
of Vermont  
*Growing local farms, healthy food, and strong communities  
in Vermont since 1971.*



**March 3, 2015**

**Senator R. Starr**

**Senate Committee on Agriculture**

Dear Senator Starr and members of the committee on agriculture,

This letter is to demonstrate NOFA-VT's support for S.22 as introduced by Senator Sears. This bill would ban the routine practice of tail-docking dairy cattle in the state of Vermont. The bovine tail has essential functions for animal behavior and maintenance, such as fly control in summer months. Originally, the practice of routine tail docking was implemented to reduce risk of leptospirosis contamination for milking staff. Additional goals of tail docking since its introduction include improved udder cleanliness, comfort for milking personnel, improved milk quality and milk hygiene. Current scientific research has found no correlations between tail-docking and improvements in cow health, cow welfare or milk quality. Research has linked the practice of tail docking to animal welfare concerns, including acute and chronic pain, psychological stress, risk for disease and affected animal maintenance behaviors. Tail-docking is prohibited by Vermont Organic Farmers, the certification body of Northeast Organic Farming Association of VT and an accredited certifier by the USDA's National Organic Program, and therefore the practice is not allowed on any of the 198 certified organic dairies in the state of Vermont.

There is strong support within professional organizations to discontinue the practice of routine tail-docking in cattle. The American Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Bovine Practitioners, National Mastitis Council and Vermont Veterinary Medical Association have all issued position papers opposing routine tail-docking unless medically necessary and performed by a veterinarian. Many European Union countries have already banned the practice, as have California, New Jersey and Rhode Island. NOFA-VT supports S.22 to do the same in Vermont.

Sincerely,

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