

November 30th 2009: Response from bodies in The Netherlands to the AVA statement on the use of CO₂ for castration of piglets:

Hans Nieuwendijk, AVA committee member has been very active in The Netherlands publicising the AVA statement on use of CO₂ for castration in piglets. This is a summary of the responses and the publicity that he has received until now.

As soon as the AVA statement about the use of CO₂ in piglets became public I contacted a dutch organisation 'Pigs in distress'. This group struggles to improve the quality of the life (and death) of the millions of pigs that are used in the production of meat. They have quite an extensive media-network.

On wednesday morning 25 th November. 'Trouw' a morning paper had an article about the AVA statement, mentioning it as a worldwide organisation of anesthetists with about 450 members. They quoted me saying; "This method will only anesthetise the conscience of veterinarians, pig breeders and consumers".

A group of other (mostly agricultural) magazines and websites took over the article and there were some good responses from pig-breeders saying they were pleased with the statement. They stated that they don't like castrations and they consider the use of CO₂ to make it even worse.

On Wednesday afternoon there was a radio-interview with me and a representative of LTO (a farmers organisation). I felt that I was given a good opportunity to explain our point of view. Although the lady representing the LTO simply stated that the CO₂ method was scientifically proven to be a good harmless method that was beneficial for the piglets, she admitted that they had stopped castrating piglets on her own pig farm.

Naturally there was a response; It was stated that the AVA does not provide new research-driven results, therefore there is no reason to change things or to reconsider the method. In these statements there is only mention of the fact that CO₂ makes the piglets painfree during the 'anaesthesia'. They do **not** mention the exposure stress, the question of CO₂ concentration being what it should be in 'field' circumstances, alleviating pain afterwards, etc.

In The Netherlands there is a political party that concerns itself almost completely with animal welfare. They have also used the AVA statement to ask questions to the minister of agriculture Mss. Gerda Verburg.

Next week I will go to the Hague and ask members of parliament if they are willing to try the CO₂/O₂ mixture themselves. This way they can experience 'live' what they are talking about. I hope that the KNMvD (Royal Dutch Veterinary Society) will also mingle in the discussion. I have not had any response from them yet. I will send them the AVA statement together with a personal text to be placed in their journal. The president of the KNMvD is Ludo Hellebrekers. The statement cannot have been a surprise to him.