

PRESS RELEASE

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Pigs Protection launches to expose the realities of global industrial pig production

Pigs Protection, a new UK-based and veterinary-led organisation, has launched to confront the realities of modern pig production. Founded by Dr Steven McCulloch, Pigs Protection is the first organisation dedicated exclusively to the impacts of pig farming on animal welfare, public health and the environment worldwide.

Pigs Protection has been established in response to the continued failure of governments and industry to address the conditions in which pigs are bred, reared, and killed. More than 60 years after the Brambell Committee (1965) investigated the impacts of intensive farming on farmed animals, pigs continue to suffer across the world.

Each year, around 1.5 billion pigs are reared and slaughtered globally. Across the dominant systems of modern pig production:

- Breeding pigs are routinely confined in cages so restrictive they cannot turn around
- Almost all piglets undergo painful mutilations, often without pain relief
- Growing pigs are raised in barren, overcrowded environments that fail to meet basic welfare needs
- Pigs are subjected to inhumane methods of slaughter, including high-concentration carbon dioxide gas

These practices persist despite recommendations from scientific advisory bodies to phase them out, widespread public concern about pig welfare, and an increasing scientific consensus on the public health and environmental impacts of industrial pig production and current levels of pork consumption.

Even in countries that claim higher animal welfare standards, major systemic welfare problems persist. In the UK, 50 to 60% of breeding pigs are confined in farrowing cages for nearly a quarter of their adult breeding lives; around 80% of pigs have their tails docked, despite legislation prohibiting routine docking; and 90% of pigs are stunned and killed using carbon dioxide, which causes suffering for up to 30 to 60 seconds.

Pigs Protection will raise public awareness of how these systems are failing pigs and contributing to wider harms, including public health risks and environmental degradation.

Dr Steven McCulloch, Chair of Pigs Protection and Research Fellow at the London School of Economics, said:

“Pigs are a highly sentient, social and intelligent species, yet the systems in which they are farmed consistently fail to meet even their most basic needs. More than sixty years after animal welfare concerns were first formally recognised in the Brambell Report (1965), the reality for pigs today remains one of confinement, mutilation and inhumane death. These dominant forms of pig production are out of step with public values, and their impacts extend far beyond pig welfare, affecting public health and the environment. Pigs Protection has been established to bring these realities into clearer public, scientific and policy focus.”

Chris Platt, Co-Founder and Strategy Director, Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, said:

“Pigs Protection reflects growing concern that modern pig production is not keeping pace with public expectations on animal welfare, public health and environmental standards. Intensive farming systems have developed rapidly, often without sufficient scrutiny of their wider impacts, and are increasingly out of step with the values many people hold about how animals should be treated. Greater transparency and policy engagement will be essential if these issues are to be meaningfully addressed.”

Edie Bowles, Executive Director, The Animal Law Foundation, said:

“Across the UK, pigs are not receiving their legal protections. Pigs are protected from routine mutilations, yet tail docking is standard practice. Pigs must also be provided a suitable environment, yet they are kept in barren enclosures and crates for prolonged periods around the time they give birth. Legal frameworks often prohibit the worst practices in principle, yet allow them to continue in practice through weak interpretations and poor enforcement. The launch of Pigs Protection is therefore both timely and necessary to help close the gap between law and reality.”

Pigs Protection will focus on:

- Communicating the realities of industrial pig production
- Challenging misleading narratives around animal welfare and food production
- Highlighting the public health and environmental impacts of current systems
- Contributing evidence-based analysis to public and policy debate

Pigs Protection will formally launch its website on 31 March 2026 at www.pigsprotection.org.

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Notes to editors

About Pigs Protection

Pigs Protection is a UK-based, veterinary-led organisation dedicated to protecting pigs worldwide. It works to expose the harms associated with industrial pig production and to advance understanding of its welfare, public health, environmental and ethical implications.

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