

Brussels, 30 November 2007

### Eurogroup Calls on Farmers and Retailers to End the Cruelty of Piglet Castration

Eurogroup for Animals is calling on European farmers and retailers to end the practice of piglet castration after the results of a new Europe-wide survey showed that the majority of farmers are ignoring the suffering it causes and are even unwilling to use pain-relief because of the extra costs involved.

The findings were revealed to delegates at the PIG-CAS stakeholder conference in Noordwijk in the Netherlands, which ends this afternoon. PIG-CAS is an EU-funded project that aims to collect and evaluate information on different attitudes to pig castration to support future EU policy. However, Eurogroup for Animals believes the industry should not wait for the EU to act but should take action now to prevent this unnecessary suffering.

Director of Eurogroup for Animals, Sonja Van Tichelen, says: *"It is the responsibility of all sectors of the industry, including farmers, retailer and the food processors, to ensure that this unnecessary suffering is ended as a matter of urgency."*

*"It would be unthinkable for a vet to castrate a cat or a dog without anaesthetic yet piglets, that have the same capacity to feel pain, are routinely castrated without any pain-relief at all. Retailers in the Netherlands have already agreed to stop selling meat from castrated pigs from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 so we urge all sectors of the industry to take action and to follow the Dutch example."*

Around 100 million male pigs are routinely castrated to avoid the chance of boar taint, a strong odour that can occur during preparation of the meat of uncastrated pigs. However, it is possible to prevent boar taint through vaccination, which is practiced in New Zealand and Australia. In the EU, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Spain traditionally do not castrate piglets. Switzerland has banned the practice, as will Norway from 2009.

Consumer research carried out by the European Commission in March this year showed that an overwhelming 62% of EU citizens would be willing to change the place where they usually shop in order to buy goods produced in line with higher welfare standards.

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#### Note to Editors

1. Eurogroup for Animals is a federation established in 1980 whose members include Dierenbescherming in the Netherlands, Deutscher Tierschutzbund eV in Germany, Fondation Brigitte Bardot in France, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the UK and Asociación Nacional para la Defensa de los Animales in Spain. It represents its member organisations at a European level, provides advice and expertise on animal welfare to European institutions and campaigns for animal welfare to be taken into account in all areas of European policy and legislation.
2. Eurobarometer is a survey of the opinions of European citizens carried out by the European Commission. The most recent results were published in March 2007.

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