

## **MIDDAY EXPRESS**

*News from the Press and Communication Service's midday briefing  
Nouvelles du rendez-vous de midi du Service Presse et Communication*

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### **Animal welfare: voluntary end to the surgical castration of piglets by 2018**

The European Commission welcomes the announcement made earlier this week that several main actors in the pig meat chain have agreed on a plan to voluntarily end the surgical castration of pigs in Europe by 1 January 2018. As a first step, from 1 January 2012, surgical castration of pigs, if carried out, shall be performed with prolonged analgesia and/or anaesthesia. A European partnership will be established in order to develop the tools necessary to reach the goals and to make sure that eventual costs are shared in a fair way. On the invitation of the European Commission and the Belgian Presidency and following a workshop on alternatives for pig castration, representatives of European farmers, meat industry, retailers, scientists, veterinarians and animal welfare NGOs met in Brussels to discuss the issue of pig castration and its possible alternatives. The parties signed a European Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs, which sets the basis for the voluntary cooperation between the actors. Surgical castration of pigs is an animal welfare concern. Castration is practiced to avoid undesirable sexual or aggressive behaviour and the development of boar taint, the odour or taste that can be evident during the cooking of pork products derived from non-castrated male pigs. Different alternatives to the procedure are already being applied in the EU and elsewhere.

The Declaration, the first of its kind at EU level for animal welfare, is an open invitation for every actor in the European pig sector to join this voluntary initiative.

For more information on the European Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/initiatives\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/initiatives_en.htm)