***Dehorning by chemical method:***

For chemical dehorning, a caustic paste of potassium, sodium, or calcium hydroxide is applied to the horn button. The horn button is the undeveloped horn prior to penetrating the skin. For best results, it is imperative the paste be applied as soon as the horn button can be felt (i.e., within 3 to 7 days of birth); otherwise all of the horn-germinating cells will not be destroyed, and regrowth will occur. It does cause some discomfort to the calf, which must be monitored to ensure that the paste does not gravitate toward its eyes if the calf starts rubbing the buttons or is out in the rain. A 1920 text oriented toward farmers, *The Practical Stock Doctor*, recommends an old technique of clipping the hair off the button to allow better paste contact and use of smaller amounts to lessen the chance of runoff.

**Technique**

1. Administer sedation, analgesia and local anaesthetic.
2. Expose the horn bud by pushing the hair back or trimming the hair around the horn.
3. Apply the caustic to the horn button. Use a wooden applicator. Apply a thin layer.
4. Re-position the hair over the paste and horn bud - i.e., cover the horn bud.
5. Although the package insert may instruct operators to clip hair at the horn bud, not clipping hair has its benefits, because the hair keeps the caustic in place and reduces irritation to other facial skin of the calf.
6. Protect the calf from accidental caustic burns. One method is to place a patch of duct tape over each horn bud. The duct tape usually falls off in a few days. Petroleum jelly may also be applied to the skin to prevent burns.
7. In some countries, the technique is only permitted in calves less than eight days of age.

**Advantages**

* performed at a young age with less stress than some other techniques
* bloodless
* can be done any time of the year
* require no hemostasis
* leave no sinus open to infection

**Disadvantages**

* painful without anaesthesia
* avoid contact with eyes; operator should wear gloves
* use of this method should be avoided in rainy weather
* not permitted in some countries
* horns or scurs follow improper technique
* requires pain control
* Calf cannot be exposed to rain or allowed near other animals for at least six hours to prevent injury to others.