

Dehorning Methods

Professional Services Veterinarian Department Technical Bulletin



When to dehorn?

Producers should dehorn at less than 2 weeks of age. This makes the experience less stressful for the calf and less work for the producer. A producer should also consider the age recommendations for the method used to dehorn. The producer should always use pain management practices while dehorning.

What methods are used?

- Dehorning Paste
- Gas Burner
- Electric Burner
- Wire
- Gouger



Types of Dehorning

Dehorning with Paste

- Restrain animal, clip hair overlaying horn buds, clean area of hair and debris
- Wear gloves and avoid contact with skin or other unprotected areas
- Apply paste to nickel sized area, covering the entire horn bud

Helpful Hints:

The chemical reaction that burns the horn to prevent growth needs a minimum of 32 degrees to work properly. The paste is effective when the calf is less than two days old. If in a group pen, the paste may cause mouth trauma to calves that lick paste.

Dehorning with Burner

- Follow operating instructions for the dehorner to ensure proper temperature
- Restrain calf, locate horn bud, press dehorner so tip of horn bud is centered in dehorner
- Press down firmly, rotating dehorner back and forth until it's through the skin layer
- Make sure skin is freed from the horn a complete 360 degrees

Helpful Hint:

Gouge horn cap off to ensure the entire horn was burned properly

Dehorning by Gouging

- Properly restrain the animal's head
- Place the open dehorner around the horn and flush with the animal's skull
- Close the dehorner with a quick sure-handed movement and maintain enough downward pressure to create a concave depression in the skull where the horn was
- Cauterize the blood vessels with a hot iron and apply bloodstop powder
- Apply fly spray if the procedure was done during the fly season or if flies are present
- Repeat steps with other horn

Helpful Hint:

Use on medium to large horns.

Dehorning with Wire

- Properly restrain the animal's head
- Cut an arm's length piece of obstetrical wire and attach to wire handles
- Place the wire on the back side, or caudal aspect, of the horn flush with the scalp
- Saw back and forth making sure to stay as close to the scalp as possible
- Cauterize the blood vessels with a hot iron and apply bloodstop powder
- Apply fly spray if the procedure was done during the fly season or if flies are present
- Repeat steps with other horn

Helpful Hint:

Use on very large horns.



Dehorning Supplies

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Pain Management: Types and When To Use

Pain management should be implemented if the horns are burned or if dehorning is done without dehorning paste. Two pain management practices include: local anesthesia with Lidocaine and general pain relief or analgesia with an anti-inflammatory drug.

Lidocaine

It takes 10-15 minutes for the nerve to stop transmitting pain, so it's suggested to inject around 10 calves and then return to the first calf to start dehorning.

- Inject 5 cc Lidocaine SQ along the corneal nerve on each side between the horn bud and the lateral aspect of the eye
- Use 20 gauge 1 to 1.5 inch needle
- Contact your local herd health veterinarian or ANIMART veterinarian for proper training

Anti-inflammatory

There are several drugs available for use in cattle for pain relief associated with inflammation:

- Banamine **Rx**
- Flunixin **Rx**
- Aspirin

QUESTIONS?

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