

# 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.



## What methods are used?

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

## Types of Dehorning

### Dehorning with Paste

A chemical reaction occurs that burns the horn and prevents growth. The reaction needs a minimum of 32 degrees to work properly.

- Effective when calf is less than 2 days old
- 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

*If in a group pen, can cause mouth trauma to other calves that may lick*

### Dehorning with Burner

- Follow the pain management practices
- 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
- Can also gouge horn cap off to ensure the entire horn was burned properly

### Dehorning by Gouging

For Medium to Large Horns

- Properly restrain the animal's head and follow pain management practices
- 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 4-7 to the other horn

### Dehorning with Wire

For Very Large Horns

- Properly restrain the animal's head and follow pain management practices
- 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 4-7 to the other horn.

# Dehorning Supplies

Professional Services Veterinarian Department Technical Bulletin



## 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-

### 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 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 or Flunixin **Rx**
- Aspirin
- Meloxicam **Extralabel Rx**
  - An oral medication in a small tablet form
  - Administer 12-24 hours prior to the procedure
  - Dose: 3-15mg tablets orally per 100 lbs.
  - 21 day meat withdrawal



### QUESTIONS?

Contact:  
1.800.255.1181  
info@animart.com