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# Dairy Guidelines

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, V.P.I., BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

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## Dehorning Dairy Cattle

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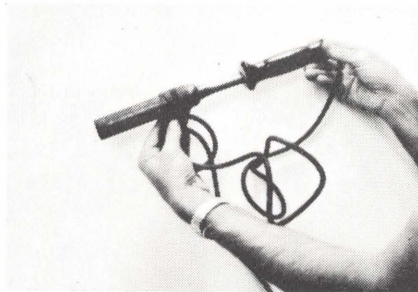
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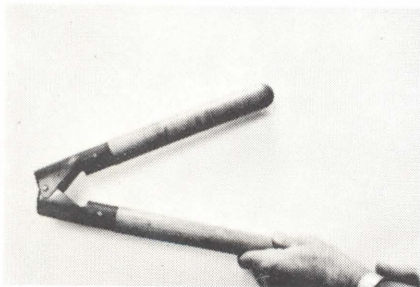
Dehorning paste in plastic bottle



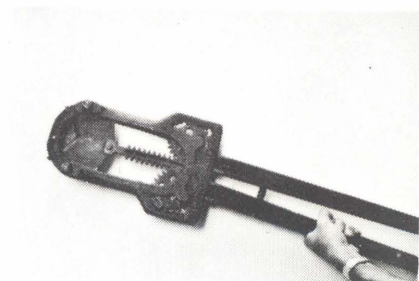
Dehorning tubes or spoons in different sizes



Electric Dehorning Iron



Barnes dehorner



Keystone type dehorner

Saws of various types are also used for dehorning older animals.

DEHORNING DAIRY ANIMALS

APPROXIMATE AGE TO DEHORN	METHOD TO USE	PROCEDURE	PRECAUTIONS
7 to 20 days	Caustic or Dehorning Paste	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clip hair around horn button.</li> <li>2. Rough horn with a file until red.</li> <li>3. Apply vaseline or grease on skin at base of horn. Keep vaseline off horn button.</li> <li>4. Apply caustic or paste to horn button.</li> <li>5. Follow specific directions on the container.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If caustic has contact with hide or skin, it will erode and leave a depression.</li> <li>2. If not properly done, horn scurs or crumpled horns will result.</li> <li>3. Caustic is dangerous to use.</li> <li>4. Isolate treated animals so others will not lick caustic, and so rain will not wash it into eyes, causing blindness.</li> </ol>
10 to 35 days	Electric or Hot Iron	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restrain animal as humanely as possible.</li> <li>2. Have iron hot as possible.</li> <li>3. Apply hot iron for about 15 to 20 seconds, or until a full ring of copper-colored burned tissue surrounds the small horn.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The hot dehorning iron can cause serious burns to operator.</li> <li>2. If iron is not hot or is not held long enough for adequate burning of tissue surrounding horn, scurs or crumpled horns will result.</li> <li>3. Must be done before horn becomes attached to skull.</li> </ol>
10 to 45 days	Dehorning Tube or Spoon (comes in various sizes)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restrain animal as humanely as possible.</li> <li>2. Place proper size instrument over horn, press down and turn to cut the hide around the base of the horn.</li> <li>3. With a quick scooping motion--scoop out the horn button.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use proper size instrument so as to remove a ring of hide and hair around base of horn.</li> <li>2. Control of excessive bleeding may be necessary.</li> <li>3. Avoid exposure of open wounds to flies or extremes of temperature.</li> </ol>

<p>3 to 5 months</p> <p>5 to 10 months</p>	<p>Small Barnes Dehorner</p> <p>Large Barnes Dehorner</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restrain animal as humanely as possible.</li> <li>2. Place dehorner over horn far enough to remove about <math>\frac{1}{4}</math>" of hide and hair around base of horn.</li> <li>3. With downward pressure and a rapid, forceful movement, spread handles of dehorner to remove or scoop out horn.</li> <li>4. With needle-nose pliers, clamp artery supplying blood to the horn.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cutting too deeply will injure the animal.</li> <li>2. If <math>\frac{1}{4}</math>" of hide and hair around the base of the horn is not removed in the process, horn scurs or crumpled horns could result.</li> <li>3. Isolate dehorned animals for observation.</li> <li>4. Control of excessive bleeding may be necessary.</li> <li>5. Avoid dehorning which exposes open wounds during fly time or extremely hot or cold weather.</li> </ol>
<p>Over 5 or 6 months</p>	<p>Keystone Dehorner</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restrain animal as humanely as possible.</li> <li>2. Place dehorner over horn so it will remove a <math>\frac{1}{4}</math>" ring of hair around base of horn.</li> <li>3. With a rapid, forceful movement squeeze handles together.</li> <li>4. With needle-nose pliers, clamp artery supplying blood to the horn.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dangerous to operator.</li> <li>2. Dull knives will crush horn, resulting in scurs or crumpled horns, as well as possible injury to the animal.</li> <li>3. Isolate animals for observation.</li> <li>4. Control of excessive bleeding may be necessary.</li> <li>5. Danger of animal being injured if not properly restrained.</li> <li>6. Do not expose open wounds to flies or extremely hot or cold weather.</li> </ol>
<p>Over 5 or 6 months</p>	<p>Sawing</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restrain animal as humanely as possible.</li> <li>2. Saw off horn, taking a <math>\frac{1}{4}</math>" of hair around base of horn.</li> <li>3. With needle-nose pliers, clamp artery supplying blood to the horn.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dangerous to operator.</li> <li>2. Improper removal will result in horn scurs or crumpled horns.</li> <li>3. Isolate animals for observation.</li> <li>4. Control of excessive bleeding may be necessary.</li> <li>5. Danger of animal being injured if not properly restrained.</li> <li>6. Do not expose open wounds to flies or extremely hot or cold weather.</li> </ol>

## DEHORNING TIPS

### I. Dehorning is advisable because:

- A. It prevents injuries to other animals in the herd.
- B. Dehorned animals are safer to work with.
- C. Dehorned animals are not discriminated against in the show ring.

### II. Early dehorning is advisable because:

- A. It is less dangerous to the herdsman.
- B. It is easier to do at a young age.
- C. It is less dangerous to animals.
- D. It is less painful and disturbing to the animal.
- E. If properly done, fewer horn scurs and neater heads on show animals will result.
- F. It is less expensive.

### III. General precautions:

- A. Dehorn calves before they leave the calf barn.
- B. Isolate animals for a few days following dehorning so they can be easily observed and dealt with in cases of emergency.
- C. Protect recently dehorned animals from flies and extremes of temperature.
- D. Use of the Keystone dehorner and the dehorning saw (necessary on older animals) is not recommended for use by inexperienced operators. Older and larger animals should be dehorned by a veterinarian or someone equipped and experienced in dehorning older animals.