



Date Drafted: _____
Date Revised: _____

DEHORNING/DISBUDDING PROTOCOL

Dairy Facility Name

**Names of person(s) trained and
authorized to perform dehorning:**

Herd Veterinarian name & phone:

All animals will be disbudded/dehorned using methods which minimize pain to the animal, are appropriate for the animal age and fit within the herd's management system. In general animals will be disbudded or dehorned as early as possible. The dehorning methods and protocols for each age group have been developed in consultation with our herd veterinarian. A checklist on the reverse side of this document has specific guidelines for disbudding.

Animal Age	Dehorning Method	Anesthetic	Fly Repellant
Calves up to 2 months			
Animals over 2 months			

CHECKLIST FOR HOT-IRON DISBUDDING

Disbudding, which is performed at less than 8 weeks of age, is greatly preferred over dehorning, performed at more than 8 weeks of age. Disbudding can be performed as early as 1-3 days of age but should be completed before 8 weeks. The checklist below is a summary only. Your herd veterinarian can assist you in developing a program for these procedures which will minimize pain, stress and post-operative health complications. This can include the use of local anesthesia and pain relievers.

- Only employees listed on the front of this sheet and who are trained in the proper use of disbudding or dehorning will perform those procedures.
- Pain relief is recommended at all ages and at any time amputation or a hot iron is used. Pain relief can be in the form of a lidocaine cornual nerve block or a ring block around the horn. Your veterinarian can instruct your staff on these procedures.
- No matter if the cauterizing iron is heated by fire, propane, battery or AC current, the barrel must be larger than the horn bud so that a complete ring of tissue around the horn bud base is cauterized. Workers should wear gloves to protect their hands.
- If the calf is not sedated, then its head must be completely restrained by a halter or other device in head locks or hutches. Inadequate restraint results in excessive tissue damage and increased processing time. The calf's ear should be held out of the way.
- Preheat the cauterizing iron to a red color. The iron should be hot enough to produce an even and complete circle when applied to a piece of wood for 2-3 seconds.
- Place the hot iron over the horn, hold it with firm pressure. After the hair starts burning, rotate the iron around the bud to evenly distribute the heat.
- Continue the application until a copper-colored ring of cauterized tissue encircles the bud, but no longer than about 10-20 seconds. Excessively long application may allow enough heat to be transferred through the skull to damage the brain.
- Inspect the calves after 30 minutes and cauterize any arteries that are still bleeding. Left alone the horn bud should fall off within 4 to 6 weeks.