

Post operative Considerations for dehorning in cattle.

Cattle should be handled post-operatively and monitored for any persistent bleeding after the operation. Bleeding is controlled by using haemostats and electrocautery. . Heat cauterising of the wound is a means of reducing blood loss and drying out the wound.

Postoperative sinusitis and flystrike (myiasis) are prevented by applying Nitrofurazone (topical antibacterial formulation) for most pathogens that commonly cause surface skin infections, including *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Enterobacter aerogenes*, and *Proteus* organisms. Spray topical antibiotic formulation of oxytetracycline and Gentian violet for bacteria and spray a larvicide to prevent myiasis. Fly strike is a problem when animals have an open wound but if dehorning is carried out in a hygienic manner, wounds heal up quickly. **Do not** apply the insecticide straight on the wound, but rather around the wound. Wound disinfectants can be applied to the wound to reduce infection risks.



Bleeding and myiasis can be minimised by dehorning during cool weather, or during the cooler parts of the day. Dehorning should not be conducted in hot weather. Infection should be minimised by avoiding muddy or dusty yards, and wet weather. Cattle should be inspected regularly and with minimal disturbance for signs of post-operative complications during the healing process, and appropriate action taken.

Wounds usually heal well with no treatment, but dehorning can cause several post-operative complications. These include uncontrolled bleeding, fly contamination, and bacterial infection. Calves require observation for bleeding for 30-60 minutes after dehorning. Coagulants (blood stop powder), tourniquets, clamps or cauterizing with a hot iron help reduce blood loss. A fly repellent is recommended and the animal is observed for signs of infection for 10-14 days after dehorning. The use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories is recommended to prolong analgesia and reduce inflammatory pain, injectible analgesics such as ketoprofen (Anafen), flunixin meglumine (Banamine) and meloxicam

(Metacam) are longer-acting than anesthetics, and may provide some pain relief for up to one day after dehorning by reducing swelling and pain. Avoid leaving animals in the yard after dehorning. Put dehorned stock onto good nutrition.

Dehorning pads can be placed on the wound and reduce the amount of blood loss from the operation. The pads are left on the wound until they drop off with the scab.

After dehorning each animal, all equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected in preparation for dehorning the next animal. Dehorning is a simple, cost effective management practice that adds value to calves. Doing the job early in life, having good restraint and using an appropriate cleaned and disinfected instrument should prevent any problems.