**CHEMICAL DEHORNING**

Chemical dehorning involves applying a stick or paste containing a caustic chemical, such as sodium or potassium hydroxide, to the horn bud. This method is best used on calves less than 3 weeks of age and can be done after 1 day of age. It is important to read and carefully follow package directions of the caustic paste to safely and effectively use this method. Necessary supplies are inexpensive and readily available. They include: • Caustic paste or stick • Clippers or scissors • Petroleum jelly

Calves to be dehorned are placed on their side and held down. The hair is clipped around the horn bud and out to make a 1-inch diameter hair less circle. Petroleum jelly is applied all around the outer edge of the hairless area to prevent burns from the chemical. The caustic material is applied inside the circle of petroleum. No bleeding will occur and there should be no fly problems. It is a good idea to use gloves when applying caustic material.

The calf should be kept away from its mother until the caustic material becomes dry and hard. If they are not kept separated, the calf may cause burns to the cow’s flank or udder due to con tam i nation from the caustic material. The calf should be kept out of the rain for a day or two. Rain may cause the caustic material to run down the calf’s face or into its eyes. A scab should form over the horn buds within a few days after applying the caustic. This scab should drop off in one to two weeks, leaving a hairless area.

