

## **HOT IRON DISBUDDING**

Hot iron dehorning can work well with young calves a variety of hot iron dehorner are available. The heat source may be fire, house hold current, batteries or butane. All these dehorner work by burning the skin at the base of the horn where the horn growth occurs. This method works best in small calves less than 2 months of age and when the horn is less than 1 inch long.

Following are steps in using hot iron dehorner: (1) Clipping the hair where the horn joins the head to make the hot iron dehorner easier to use. (2) Warm the dehorner to its proper temperature and restrain the calf. (3) Place the hot iron over the horn and hold it in place with firm pressure. (4) Twist the iron evenly to distribute the heat. (5) After 15 seconds of contact, remove the iron and look at the skin for a copper color indicating the skin has been heated enough to prevent horn growth. A white ring of skin should be seen inside the copper ring and next to the horn. If the proper color change does not occur, reapply the iron for 10 seconds and check the skin color again. (6) The horn should fall off within four to six weeks.

### **Considerations**

- More painful for the animal than caustic paste, if the nerves in the area are not properly blocked, the calf may resist violently
- Always remove burnt debris from the hot iron in between calves so that it burns more efficiently.
- Iron may fail to get back up to heat between calves, resulting in ineffective disbudding;
- Requires more physical restraint of animal than paste disbudding
- Poses a risk of injury to the handler.
- If the iron is left on the skin for too long it can cause thermal burns to non-targeted areas; it may even cause thermal meningitis.



Figure 1

Place hot iron on the bud with pressure for 15 seconds



Figure 2

burn until there's a copper colored ring



Figure 3

Repeat on other bud