

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Hemorrhage

- The risk of hemorrhage is greatly increased in older calves
- Observe calves closely for one hour following dehorning
- Wound powder may be applied to the surface of the horn bud after dehorning
- Note: avoid powder use if the sinus cavity is exposed

Pain

- Animals should be monitored during and after the procedure for signs of unnecessary pain, such as vocalization, reluctance to move, and failure to nurse. Such animals should be treated with a systemic analgesic such as flunixin meglumine. Severe pain warrants the attention of a veterinarian.

Horn regrowth

- Inadequate removal of the corium (horn-producing cells) will result in the regrowth of the horn, generally a partial growth that leads to scurs. Depending on the extent of the regrowth, the dehorning procedure may need to be repeated.

Flystrike

- Dehorning method that leave an open wound should NOT be used during fly season. Paste and hot dehorning are acceptable anytime of year.
- The use of a fly repellent may be warranted.

Infection / Sinusitis

- Animals should be monitored for signs of infection in the days following dehorning, such as redness, swelling, and discharge.
- Sinusitis is a particular risk in older calves, due to the fact that as the horn grows, the sinus grows into the center of the horn, and thus removal of the horn creates a defect in the skull that extends into the sinus, and thus an opportunity for infection.
- Avoid the use of elevated feeders immediately after the procedure to prevent entry of debris into the wound

- Minimize environment exposure, as dust and rain may increase the risk of sinusitis

Injuries during Ligation Method

- After about a week of ligation, the connection between the frontal sinus and the horn begin to weaken; and if the horn collides with anything hard enough during this time, the force may cause the horn to break off before the appropriate time and cause exposure of the frontal sinus.

Potential decreased weight gain following dehorning of older calves due to pain and stress

- Calves should be dehorned as young as possible to minimize stress.
- Use of local and systemic analgesics is recommended.

Tetanus

- The use of tetanus antitoxin should be considered, and calves should be vaccinated for tetanus.

Bovine papilloma virus (warts)

- Dehorning instruments can provide a fomite for transmission of the papilloma virus, and should be disinfected between calves. This can be achieved by maintaining a bucket of disinfectant for rinsing between animals.

Thermal Injuries

- 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.

Xylazine Related

- Reduced reticulorumen activity
- Xylazine increases the risk of aspiration pneumonia from the inhalation of either saliva or rumen contents.