Complications of dehorning/disbudding:

* Heat meningitis – This happens as a result of prolonged heat and pressure to the skull, which consequentially affects the brain. Signs of heat meningitis are cerebral signs including depression and sudden death, ataxia, blindness, and seizures within 24 hours of the disbudding procedure. To prevent this, you should not leave the hot iron pressed to the head for no longer than 15 seconds at a time and allow 10 second intervals between applications.
* Haemorrhage – As the cornual artery supplies blood to the horn, when dehorning, excessive blood can be loss from this artery and other blood vessels surrounding the horn. To prevent haemorrhaging you can:
* Immediately clamp bleeding vessels with forceps
* Use gauze to apply pressure to bleeding vessels
* Use a hot iron to cauterize the blood vessels
* Infection – With many invasive methods of dehorning, the risks of infections are great. With open frontal sinuses these risks are even greater. Measures can be taken to decrease these risks such as:
* Clean dehorning instruments with disinfectant between use on animals.
* Make sure dehorning instruments are kept sharp. Try to cleanly cut bone tissue rather than crushing it, as crushed tissue may be more vulnerable to infection.
* Treat wounds with blood coagulant powder.
* Monitor mechanically dehorned animals for signs of infection, such as lack of appetite, fever, abnormal head carriage and foul odor.
* Give preventative anti-biotics with mechanically dehorned animals especially with opened sinuses.
* Disbud calves before 2 months of age, before the horns are attached to the skull to prevent opened sinuses.
* Myiasis – Where there is a wound flies will naturally be attracted and myiasis can occur which can increase the risks of infections. To prevent this you can dehorn/disbud outside of fly season (if applicable to the location) and spray wounds with fly repellant.