Removal of Antlers (Velveting)

AVMA Policy - The AVMA recommends that if amputation of the growing, living antler of a member of the family Cervidae (e.g., deer, moose, elk, caribou) is to be performed, it must be conducted humanely, and within the bounds of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship. The procedure must minimize stress and pain to the animal with the use of humane handling and analgesia, while protecting the animal against excessive blood loss, risk of infection, or fly strike.

Introduction – Velvet refers to the entire cartilaginous antler (prior to calcification) of a range of cervids including deer and elk. Most velvet antler is exported to Asian markets (particularly Korea) as a complementary medicine or dietary supplement, but it is also sold for these purposes in the United States.

Purpose – Velvet antler is innervated and vascularized tissue and its removal without analgesia causes pain.

AAZV Position – Support

Justification – When velvet antler is farmed the removal of velvet causes stress and pain to the animal that should be mitigated through refinements of husbandry and the use of short- and long-term analgesia. The effectiveness of lidocaine as a short-term local anesthetic has been demonstrated.

AAZV Contact -

Wm. Kirk Suedmeyer, DVM, Dipl. ACZM
Wm. Kirk Suedmeyer, DVM, Dip ACZM
President, American Association of Zoo Veterinarians
Director of Animal Health and Research
Director of Emergency Medical Services
The Kansas City Zoo
6800 Zoo Drive
Kansas City, MO 64132-1711
wksahc@juno.com