Dehorning beef calves
Supplementary Guideline

Introduction
The New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) has released guidance on provision of local anaesthetic for disbudding/dehorning to comply with Regulations 57 and 58 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 (effective from 1 October 2019).

Two resources are currently available from the NZVA:

- **Local anaesthetic authorisation guideline** – provides guidance to veterinarians to fulfil their professional and legislative obligations when authorising local anaesthetic for calf disbudding through veterinary authorisation and/or Veterinary Operating Instructions.
- **Disbudding training and assessment guide** – provides guidance to veterinarians on content which should be delivered to non-veterinarians who are being trained to use local anaesthetic to disbudd calves in order to comply with Regulation 57 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.

These resources may also be used by veterinarians approached by clients wishing to remove horn tissue from beef cattle, with minor changes as appropriate to the differences in husbandry practices in the beef sector.

Beef calves in extensive farming systems are often brought in for routine husbandry procedures at an age where the horn bud has become attached to the underlying bone (ie. is no longer ‘free floating’). Removal of this attached horn tissue is therefore dehorning, not disbudding (see definition in Regulation 57(6) of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018).

These guidelines are intended to provide veterinarians with guidance on the expected standard of practice when assisting beef farming clients wishing to dehorn beef calves in accordance with Regulation 58 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.

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Comments
Guidelines

- Beef cattle sires with polled genetics should be used in preference to those with horns.
- Calves should be disbudded (between 2-6 weeks of age) in preference to dehorning, if possible.
- If calves are unable to be disbudded, dehorning should be undertaken as early as possible (preferably while calves are under 6 months of age).
  Note: Cattle over 6 months of age are also required to have appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic for castration (by any method) in accordance with Regulation 53 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.
- Cattle should be early-age disbudded/dehorned in preference to being dehorned or ‘tipped’ as adult cattle.
- All calves must be dehorned in accordance with Regulation 58 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.
- The legislation does not preclude use of any particular technique, provided all personnel are trained and competent in the selected technique.
- Veterinarians should refer to the existing NZVA resources for guidance on issuing veterinary authorisation and/or Veterinary Operating Instructions for provision of local anaesthetic for calf dehorning.

Provision of local anaesthetic for calf dehorning

As for disbudding of calves, there are three options available to support calf welfare through provision of local anaesthetic for calf dehorning. Please refer to the NZVA Local anaesthetic authorisation guideline for detail on these three options:

1. Veterinarians and their technicians perform the dehorning with local pain relief +/- sedation +/- non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs). Veterinarians and veterinary practices seeking guidance on disbudding and/or dehorning of cattle are referred to NZVA Policy 5h - Dehorning of Cattle and Disbudding of Calves, and the NZVA Standard Operating Procedure for disbudding of calves.

2. A veterinarian issues a restricted veterinary medicine (RVM) authorisation to allow a non-veterinarian to buy local anaesthetic for dehorning calves for which they are the owner or person in charge. Veterinarians and veterinary practices seeking guidance on veterinary authorisation are referred to the NZVA Local anaesthetic authorisation guideline.

3. A veterinarian issues a Veterinary Operating Instruction (VOI) for use of local anaesthetic for dehorning calves for which they are not the owner or person in charge. Veterinarians and veterinary practices seeking guidance on VOIs are referred to the NZVA Local anaesthetic authorisation guideline.