

Band-dehorning SGF SANT Jessie 020765

an example of using elastic bands to dehorn cattle

John Potter, July 1, 2009

Background

Jessie was calved on August 26, 2008, and she was 8¼ months old when I started her band-dehorning procedure. She is the youngest animal I have dehorned using this method, and her horns measured 3¼ inches long at the time of banding.

Procedure

1. About 6 p.m. on May 18, 2009, I put Jessie in my handling chute's head gate and administered 3cc of Tetanus Toxoid and 5cc of Flunixin. The shots were given SQ at separate locations on the right side of her neck.
2. Using rechargeable-battery-powered electric clippers, I removed the hair from a ½-inch ring around the base of each horn.
3. I applied a latex band to the base (at the hairline) of each horn using a Wadsworth XL Bander. Jessie remained completely calm and quiet during this step, and I released her from the chute immediately after the second band was in place.
4. Within a few minutes of her release from the chute, Jessie began showing signs of discomfort and restlessness. However, by 8 p.m. she was eating and drinking normally. At 10 p.m. she was lying down, calmly chewing her cud. The pictures below were taken about noon on May 19th.



5. On the morning of June 13th, Jessie knocked off her left horn, and she had a very slight trickle of blood coming from the wound. Since flies were immediately attracted to the wound, I quickly moved her to my chute and sprayed Prozap Screw Worm Aerosol on the wound as well as around the base of her right horn. All flies were repelled, and the wound began to dry and heal nicely.

6. By the morning of June 15th, Jessie's right horn had become very loosely attached, so I moved her back to my chute. The horn was easily removed, and only one or two drops of blood appeared on the wound. I sprayed both the new and old wounds with the Prozap Aerosol and applied Python Insecticide Dust to her face, poll, neck, and back. The pictures below were taken on June 16th after most of the fly dust had been worked in or rubbed off.



7. On June 18th I applied another dose of the Prozap Aerosol to the wounds, both of which were healing normally, then turned Jessie out into the pasture.

8. As I write this on July 1st, Jessie's dehorning wounds have healed perfectly, and her temperament and friendliness are exemplary in the best sense.

Notes

1. As a general rule I do not recommend using the band-dehorning method during "fly season." Here in southwestern Michigan my normal times for band-dehorning are February/March and September/October. I dehorned Jessie in May for several reasons. One reason is that she is a very docile and friendly heifer. I knew that her daily routine put her in a paddock next to my chute and that I would be able to monitor her closely, especially during daylight hours when flies would be present. Another reason is that Jessie will be bred this summer, and I prefer not to dehorn a pregnant heifer or cow. Waiting until next spring, after she calves and before she is bred back, would have resulted in her horns growing too long to suit my management program. Also, there would not be any assurance that next year's banding opportunity would be earlier than this year's.

2. Using Flunixin is a new addition to my technique, and I am very pleased with the apparent reduction in discomfort and stress that results from its use. Jessie's behavior was completely normal within 4 hours of applying the bands. Flunixin (flunixin meglumine) is a potent, non-narcotic, nonsteroidal, analgesic prescription drug with anti-inflammatory and anti-fever activity. It is labeled for intravenous use in beef and non-lactating dairy cattle. On the advice of my veterinarian, I inject Flunixin subcutaneously.

3. I would never use the band-dehorning technique without having Prozap Screw Worm Aerosol or some other product on hand that kills flies, fly eggs, and maggots and repels flies from wounds. A warm spell during my preferred dehorning times can result in the presence of flies.