Dehorning, Castrating, and Docking

Floron C. Faries, Jr. DVM, MS
Objectives

- Describe dehorning techniques for calves
- Describe castrating techniques for calves, lambs, and pigs
- Describe tail docking techniques for lambs
- Discuss benefits of dehorning, castrating, and docking
Dehorning

- What is dehorning?
  - Process of removing or preventing (disbudding) the growth of horns

- Why?
  - Improve appearance
  - Reduce injuries
  - Increase feeder space
  - Improve value

- Two methods
  - Non-invasive
  - Invasive
Restraint

- Very important
- Remember safety
- Restrain head
Non-Invasive

- Bloodless
- Less than 30 days age (at birth)
- Types
  - Chemical paste
  - Hot iron
Invasive

- Blood flow
- Greater than 30 days of age
- Involves cutting or scooping the horn off

Types
- Tube dehorner
- Barnes’ dehorner
- Keystone dehorner
Castrating

What is castration?
- Process of removing the testicles from a male
- Less than 2 months of age (at birth)

Why?
- Prevent mating or fighting
- Improve carcass quality
- Improve value
- Gentle

Two methods
- Non-invasive
- Invasive
Restraint

- Young calves
  - On side
- Older calves
  - In chute
- Young lambs, kids, pigs
  - On back
  - V-shaped table
Non-invasive

- Bloodless
- Tetanus antitoxin
- Crimps or constricts arteries – testicles die

Types
- Burdizzo
- Elastrator
- Calicrate bander
- Short-scrotumed
- Chemical castration
- Burdizzo
- Elastrator
- Calicrate smart bander
Invasive

- Blood flow
- Sanitation is key
  - Remove testicles external to scrotum
- Types
  - Knife/scalpel
    - Emasculator
- Knife
- Scalpel
- Emasculator
Calf Castration

- Non-invasive
  - Tetanus antitoxin

- Invasive
  - Remove 1/3-1/2 scrotum with knife
  - Force testicles external to scrotum
  - Extract testicles
  - Sever spermatic cord
    - Knife scrape
    - Pull
    - Emasculator
Pig Castration

- Invasive
  - Make two slits through scrotum and tunic with knife or scalpel
  - Extract testicles
  - Sever spermatic cord
    - Knife scrape
    - Pull
    - Emasculator
Lamb and Kid Castration

- Non-invasive or invasive
- Tetanus antitoxin
- Same techniques as calves
Docking

What is docking?
- Practice of cutting the tail off an animal

Why?
- Improve appearance
- Increase hygiene (sheep)
- Reduce tail biting (pigs)
- Keep tails out of harnesses (draft horses)

Two methods
- Non-invasive
- Invasive

Techniques vary among species
Non-invasive

Bloodless

Types:
  - Elastrator
  - Burdizzo
Invasive

- Blood flow
- Sanitation is important
- Types
  - Knife
  - Scalpel
  - Blade pliers
  - Emasculator
Swine Docking

- Cut tail 1 inch from base
- Don’t cut into the base
- Invasive
Sheep Docking

- Cut 2 inches from base
- Non-invasive
- Invasive
- Tetanus antitoxin

Too short