

## Vet newsletter article content from AgriHealth

### Pain relief at calf disbudding

Your vets focus on getting the best outcomes on your farm in all of the procedures and programs we recommend. An area where our vet practice has seen great uptake is for disbudding young calves.

Calf disbudding is an essential farm practice. However, as the process involves burning skin and underlying horn tissue it is painful and causes inflammation. As with all procedures, our aim is to achieve the optimal outcome for your business and for the health and welfare of your animals.

Compelling research shows that calves provided a combination of local anaesthesia, sedation and an anti-inflammatory injection are less affected by disbudding compared with calves given only local anaesthesia and sedation. We no longer disbud calves without providing 'local' pain relief, as from this year this is a legal requirement

If you have had a painful procedure under local anaesthesia (e.g. dentistry work) you will relate to the severe pain when the local 'wears off' an hour or two after administration. Behavioural and stress studies in calves report that calves demonstrate this same intense pain within a couple of hours of disbudding. Adding a longer-term pain killer into the calf disbudding program mitigates this pain and stress response, and allows the calf to continue 'normal' calf behaviours throughout the day of disbudding. This includes a more rapid return to feeding, with some studies showing higher milk intakes and growth rates following disbudding in appropriately treated calves.

This year we are offering the additional pain relief in our disbudding service at an affordable price, due to availability of Melovem 30 which has a higher concentration of pain relief per ml. The price of our 'gold standard' service is \$10.00 per calf compared to \$8.50 for local and sedation alone. For peace of mind and happier calves, that's only an additional \$75 for 50 calves.

We recommend the use of the full 'gold-standard' calf disbudding service to improve the well-being, health and welfare of your replacement heifers.

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