

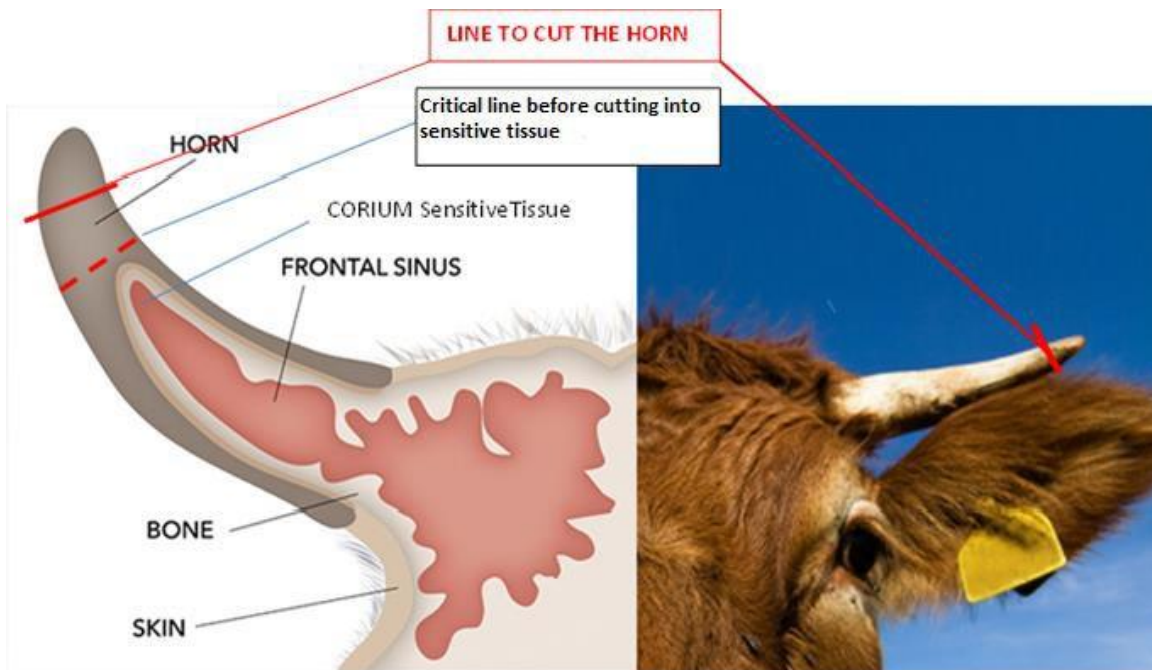
## Horn tipping of cattle

Current as of March 2023.

**This factsheet assists a person responsible for cattle in meeting their animal welfare obligations when horn tipping cattle.**

### What is horn tipping?

Horn tipping (or trimming) is the removal of the insensitive part of the horn of cattle resulting in a blunt and shorter horn-end (Image 1).



*Image 1 – Line drawing and photograph showing location to tip the horn. Source: DPIRD*

**When done correctly there is no bleeding from the horn.**

Horn tipping in cattle may reduce the risk of overgrown horns penetrating areas of the face and decrease the likelihood of the animals catching their horns in fences, yards or trees. However, tipping does not reduce the risks of fighting, or carcass bruising. Cattle with tipped horns, can still cause injury to other animals and stock handlers.

Horn tipping should be carried out when the horn is:

- growing in a direction that is likely to penetrate the skin
- touching the skin or the eye of the animal
- blocking the ability for an animal to see clearly from one eye
- sharp and a potential hazard to humans and other livestock.

## Horn Tipping vs Dehorning

Cutting into the sensitive corium of the horn (i.e. cutting that results in the horn bleeding) is, for the purposes of the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*, dehorning. It is a painful procedure and may be an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* and its regulations, if performed on animals older than 6 months without appropriate pain relief (local or topical anaesthetic and an analgesic). Dehorning is usually done as a young calf, and if done correctly, results in the removal all horn growth cells preventing horn growth.

### Cattle under 6 months of age

Must be performed by a person who has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to do the procedure competently or under the direct supervision of a competent person.

Pain relief is currently not mandatory, but best practice is to use appropriate pain relief in accordance with the advice of your veterinarian.

### Cattle 6 months of age or older

Must be performed by a person who has the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to do the procedure competently or under the direct supervision of a competent person.

Appropriate pain relief is required to be used which includes:

- a local or topical anaesthetic, and
- an analgesic.

Each of the anaesthetic and analgesic is given in accordance with:

- the approved product information for that product, or
- the written instructions of a veterinarian.

## Horn tipping procedure in cattle over 6 months of age

A person should not undertake horn tipping unless they are competent to perform the procedure or acting under the direct supervision of a person competent to perform the procedure.

Table 1 – Procedure for horn tipping cattle over 6 months of age	
Drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft the animal from the rest of the mob for closer inspection.</li> </ul>
Restraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place the animal in a veterinary crush and restrain its head to prevent movement during the tipping procedure.</li> <li>• Handle the animal safely to ensure its head is stable.</li> </ul>
Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the animal.</li> <li>• Assess the amount of horn needed to be removed.</li> <li>• Determine the animal's age:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the animal is 6 months of age or older and only its insensitive horn tip needs to be removed, choose horn tipping instrument of choice.</li> <li>- If the animal is 6 months of age or older and more than its insensitive horn tip needs to be removed, appropriate pain relief must be used.</li> <li>- If the animal less than 6 months of age and more than its insensitive horn tip needs to be removed, appropriate pain relief is not mandatory but recommended.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Choose horn tipping instrument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horning tipping instruments include (Image 2):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- embryotomy wire (saw wire connected by two stainless steel handles)</li> <li>- horn saw</li> <li>- parrot teeth tippers</li> <li>- guillotine dehorner.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Position the tool at or over the horn tip located at the furthest point away from the horn base making sure to avoid cutting into the sensitive tissue (corium).</li> <li>• If in doubt progress with a series of horn tipping cuts from the tip of horn.</li> <li>• Only remove the insensitive tip of the horn, which is usually the last 4 to 5cm of the horn.</li> </ul>



*Image 2 – Instruments used for tipping the horns of adult livestock (Source: Meat & Livestock Australia)*

NOTE: Read and follow the manufacturers label for correct and safe use.

## More information

- Animal Welfare (Transport, Saleyards and Depots) (Cattle and Sheep) Regulations 2020
- *Veterinary Practices Act 2021*
- Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Land Transport of Livestock; Livestock at Saleyards and Depots; Cattle
  - Animal Welfare Factsheets:
    - Transporting and selling sheep and cattle with injured or broken horns
    - Management of sheep and cattle with ingrown horns
    - Humane destruction of sheep and cattle
    - Animal Welfare Responsibilities – Consignors and Transporters
    - Animal Welfare Responsibilities – Saleyards
  - [agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare](https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare)



For more information and to view the suite of animal welfare factsheets, scan the QR code, or visit: <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare/resources-and-publications>.

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