

Animal welfare

Ensuring all animals receive appropriate care



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Horn tipping of livestock

Horn tipping is the removal of the insensitive part of the horn of an adult animal resulting in a blunt horn end.

Horn tipping in livestock is recommended as overgrown horns can penetrate the sensitive areas of the face. It can also reduce injury to both livestock handlers and animals caused by aggressive horned animals.

Horn tipping should be carried out when:

- the horn is growing in a direction that is likely to penetrate the skin
- the horn is touching the skin of the animal
- the horn is blocking the ability for an animal to see clearly from one eye.

Horn tipping procedure

Remove the animal from the rest of the herd for closer inspection.

Place cattle in a crush and restrain the head to prevent movement during the tipping procedure.

When tipping the horns of sheep, handle animals safely to ensure the head is stable.



Image 1: Instruments used for tipping the horns of adult livestock (Photo courtesy of Meat & Livestock Australia)



Image 2: Bull showing tipped horns

Various instruments can be used to remove the horn tip and include surgical or embryotomy wire (saw wire connected by two stainless steel handles), a horn saw, parrot teeth tippers and guillotine dehorner (image 1).

Position the tool above the sensitive tissue, known as the corium, as shown in image 3 overleaf.

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Only remove the tip of the horn, which is usually the last 4–5cm of the horn (image 3).

Cutting into the corium is a painful procedure and may be an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*.

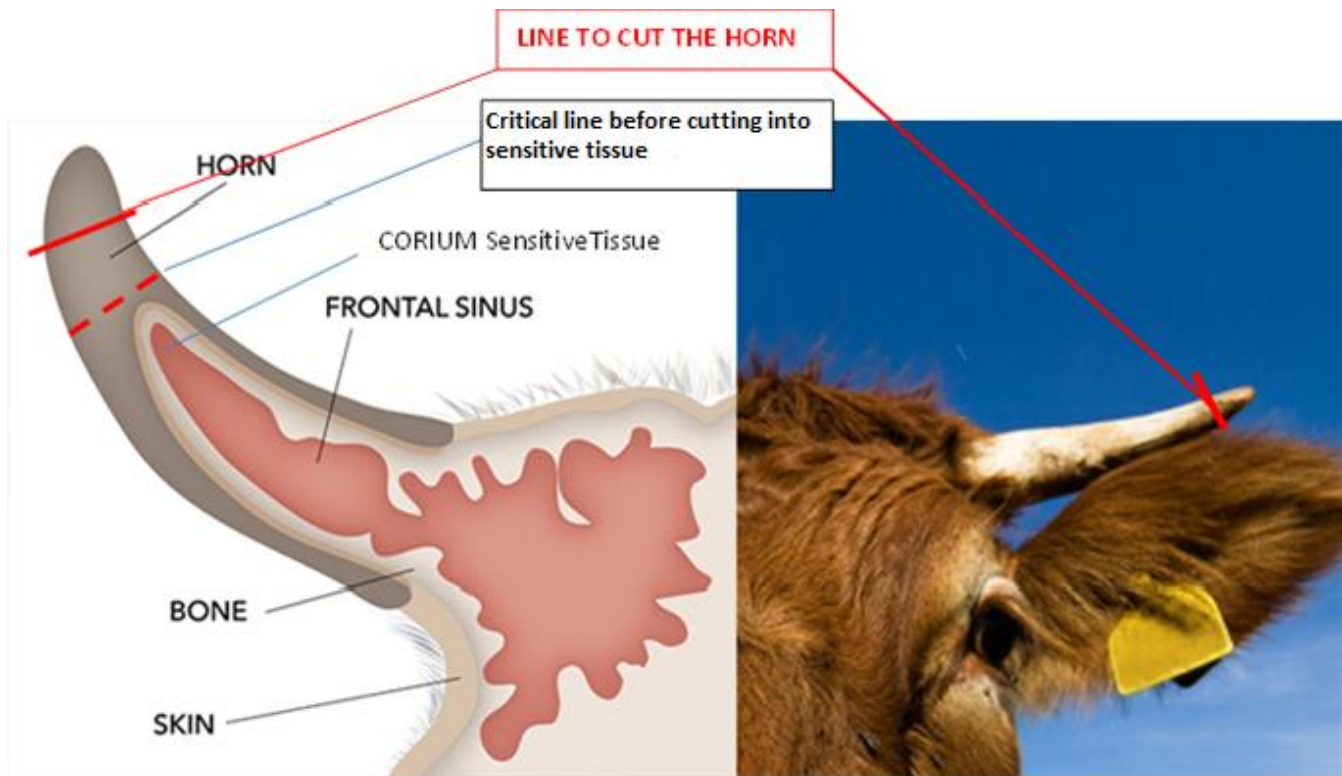


Image 3: Line drawing and photograph showing location to tip the horn

Management of animals with ingrown horns

An ingrown horn is a horn that breaks the skin surface of the face of an animal. In serious cases, it may continue to grow and penetrate the sensitive areas of facial tissue. Horned animals must be regularly and closely inspected to avoid this animal welfare issue.

If a horn penetrates the skin, the animal is likely to suffer pain from the pressure on and destruction of sensitive nerves in the face. Failure to trim the horn and alleviate this harm is a possible offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*.

If an animal has an ingrown horn it is not considered fit for transport, as transport is likely to cause further pain.

Animals suffering from an ingrown horn can be:

- examined and treated by a veterinarian who will advise on whether the animal is fit for transport or
- humanely destroyed on the farm.

If ingrown horns are tipped, the resulting wound needs to be cleaned with antiseptic. Fly repellent should also be applied. Deep wounds may need to be examined and treated by a veterinarian to ensure the wounds heal adequately.

For more information, visit agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare