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VETERINARY CONTINUING EDUCATION



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DEHORNING ADULT GOATS
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Removing horns from adult goats is a job that most veterinarians would prefer to refer to another clinic. We see quite a few dairy and pet goats in our practice and therefore have to perform this procedure frequently. Here are a few hints to help make the surgery less painful for both you and the goat.

1. Have the goat brought in to the clinic for the procedure. We have small runs in the basement for large dogs and small ruminants. Have the feed withheld for at least 12 hours prior to the surgery. We require a prior history of tetanus vaccination.

2. Anesthetize the goat with .05 mg/# xylazine IM followed with 2.25 mg/# Ketamine IV 5-10 minutes later. Both of these drugs are used off label. Remember that goats are very sensitive to anesthetics and apnea is common. Have Yohimbine on hand to reverse the xylazine in case of an emergency. The dose for Yohimbine is the same as xylazine. With the recent purchase of an Isoflurane machine Dr. Scheftel has been inducing the goats with Surital, intubating them and using Isoflurane for the dehorning.

3. If necessary we also block the cornual nerves with a ml or so of lidocaine. The cornual nerve on a goat has two branches. The landmarks are easy to remember: halfway between the medial canthus and the medial base of the horn and halfway between the lateral canthus and the lateral base of the horn. You may use some lidocaine in a ring block around the horns if needed but the skin is so tightly adhered that it is difficult to inject.

4. Clip and scrub the horn bases for surgery.

5. Using a scalpel, make a skin incision around the base of each horn about 1/2" from the proximal end of the horn.

6. Cut the horn off with obstetrical wire using the incisions to guide you.

7. You may try to pull the arteries from the wounds as you do with cattle but usually they are not prominent and the bleeding is profuse. Apply 5-10 4x4 sterile gauzes to the horn wounds with antibiotic ointment on the woundside gauze. Wrap cling gauze around the head and under the jaw keeping pressure on the wounds to stop hemorrhage. Don't make the cling too tight. Then wrap Elasticon around the cling either making holes for the ears or wrapping around behind them. Again this must not be too tight. This leaves a bonnet or helmet effect.

8. The goat is given long-acting penicillin SQ and a tetanus booster and sent home when able to walk.

9. The bandages are left on for about one week and removed by the owner. Often the 4x4s are stuck to the wounds and must be soaked off with hot water and hydrogen peroxide.

Complications that may arise include cornual sinus infections and the inability of the owners to remove the bandages in which case we have to make a house call or the goats gets another trip back to the clinic.