Veterinary surgeons are personally accountable for their practice and must always be prepared to justify their decisions and actions.

When providing care, veterinarians take all reasonable care in using their professional skills:

* to treat animals humanely.
* ensure that a range of reasonable treatment options are offered and explained, including prognoses and possible side effects
* make decisions on treatment regimes based first and foremost on animal health and welfare considerations, but also the needs and circumstances of the clients.

Vets should use language appropriate for the client and explain any clinical or technical terminology that may not be understood. Some livestock owners may consider dehorning offensive. It is the duty of the veterinarian to inform the client of the main benefit achieved which is to create a safer workplace for herdmates, handlers and workers - a benefit that outweighs the short period of discomfort at dehorning time.

The following are a list of welfare considerations clients should fully understand before consenting to the dehorning procedures:

1. All methods of physical dehorning cause pain and side effects.
2. Young calves recover quicker and have fewer complications than older calves.
3. There is no evidence to show young calves experience less pain than older calves.
4. Local anaesthesia prior to dehorning eliminates acute pain for a few hours after dehorning.
5. Local anaesthesia, combined with a sedative and an analgesic (pain reliever), may provide the best pain relief.
6. Dehorning without anaesthesia is inhumane and unethical.
7. Use of pain relief is an additional cost for producers. Pain relief may be limited by the availability of drugs for farmers to use and the scarcity of veterinarians in farm animal practice.
8. Control of bleeding is essential when dehorning older calves.

