

# Delivering training to dairy producers for disbudding pain control, and improving our understanding of barriers to adoption

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**DAIRY**  
**at GUELPH**  
CANADA'S DAIRY UNIVERSITY

# ***Project team***

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***Julia Saraceni – MSc thesis***





Five ½ day workshops with  
6 – 10 participants

NO experience performing  
a cornual nerve block

**23 assigned to online training**

- Evaluated prior to & after workshop

**20 assigned to no online training**

- Evaluated after workshop





## Efficacy

Online only → 21/23

Hands-on only → 15/23

Hands-on + online → 21/23



Outcome	Online ( $\pm$ SE)	Hands-on	Combined
Written score	$4.7 \pm 0.1^{AB}$	$4.4 \pm 0.2^A$	$4.9 \pm 0.1^B$
Block technique	$2.3 \pm 0.2^A$	$2.6 \pm 0.1^B$	$2.5 \pm 0.1^{AB}$
Disbudding technique	$2.6 \pm 0.1^A$	$2.9 \pm 0.1^B$	$2.8 \pm 0.1^{AB}$
Time to block completion	$62 \pm 11^A$	$41 \pm 5^{AB}$	$41 \pm 5^B$
Time to disbudding completion	$76 \pm 11^A$	$48 \pm 6^A$	$65 \pm 8^A$
Pre-evaluation self-confidence	$3.3 \pm 0.2^A$	$3.8 \pm 0.2^B$	$4.5 \pm 0.1^C$
Post-evaluation self-confidence	$4.5 \pm 0.1^A$	$4.5 \pm 0.2^{AB}$	$4.8 \pm 0.1^B$

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producers for disbudding pain  
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*pro* **Action** <sup>®/MD</sup>







## Methods

Phone interviews from Aug 20 – Jan 21

Initial advertisements + snowball sampling

29 participants (new to multi-generational)

Thematic analysis (Aurini *et al.*, 2016)

Data saturation was reached on most prompts

Motivation included **calf comfort** and **post-operative recovery**, **concern for animals**, and **public perception**

*“I think most of us are just fairly concerned about the wellbeing of our livestock. So if we can do something that improves that, or minimizes any negative impacts of practices we have to carry out, I think that’s a bigger motivator than any regulation”*

*“You wouldn’t go to the dentist to have a tooth pulled out without having it frozen. I wouldn’t.....it goes hand in hand [with] disbudding”*

*“I think consumers already have a negative enough vision of agriculture that we don’t need to go out of our way to make ourselves look bad. We should be doing things collectively to say hey, we’re doing the best things we could do right now”*

Barriers included **cost**, **lack of training**,  
**farmer attitude**, and **calf age** at  
disbudding

“I haven’t started freezing yet  
because...I’m nervous of sticking that  
needle in behind [the eye]”

“There are a lot more young people.  
They’re a lot more progressive. They’re  
a lot more in tune with...what’s  
required for good animal husbandry I  
feel”

“...I don’t know how to describe  
them, like old dude farmers? Seem to  
resent what [proAction] tells them to  
do, and don’t seem to see the  
advantage as much”

“I’m not sure how many guys have actually you know, sat  
down and been shown [by] a vet, or by another farmer or  
someone with experience how to find that nerve, how to  
block it properly and that kind of thing. So they just keep  
going the way they’ve always gone”

“I think based on our experience it’s a huge  
difference whether you do them at 3 or 4 weeks of  
age, or whether you do them at 10 or 12 weeks of  
age...I find those 3 seconds per horn of initial pain  
doesn’t really justify the hassle....when I just feel the  
[meloxicam] in our situation....is more beneficial to  
the animal than also freezing it”



A black and white dairy calf is lying down in a stall, wearing a blue halter. The calf is positioned in the center of the frame, with its head down and body extending towards the right. The stall has metal bars on the sides and a wooden floor covered with straw bedding. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the calf.

*disbudding.com*

# A GUIDE TO DISBUDDING



Follow along for resources and tutorials that take you through disbudding your dairy calves.

DISCOVER THE GUIDE →