

THE Cutting Edge of Polled Technology

Dairymen who use bulls that sire polled calves are putting themselves instead of their calves on the cutting edge of technology. It is time for more breeders to adopt a kinder method of dehorning: Using breeding instead of cutting or burning technology. My dad, Walter told me many times, "If you want to work with cattle you should be at least as smart as they are." I sometimes felt insulted but his point did sink in. Most people prefer to work with docile and hornless cattle. In order to accomplish this, they must put the animal through a traumatic event of dehorning. The animal is left with open bleeding wounds or burn scars for some time after and usually goes off feed for a period of time. Even when healed the animal can be hard to handle and difficult to confine for a long period of time. Any work around the head-- ear tagging, head clipping, etc. -- can be difficult since the animal's disposition has been perhaps permanently changed. The polled concept is pure and simple. If you want docile and thrifty cattle: Breed the horns off rather than cut saw or burn them off. Horns are an undesirable trait that are being eliminated in the gene pool of some beef breeds. The polled gene is dominant and I think some day polled cattle will dominate.