THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Melbourne Veterinary School

3.1 Management procedures Birth to weaning

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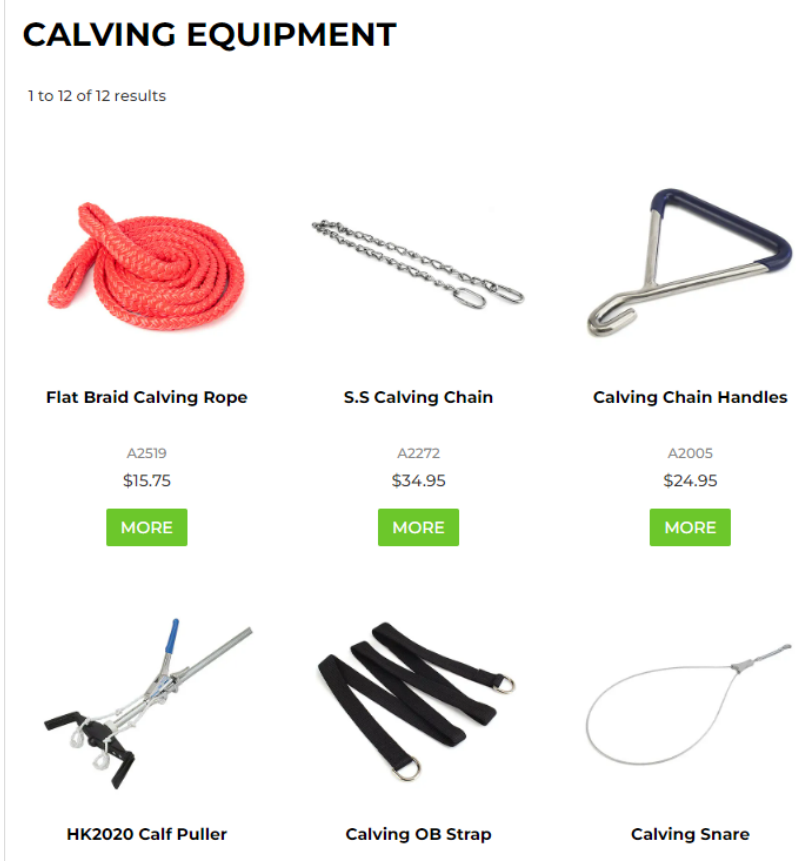
Common management procedures

- There are a moderate number of procedures that occur in the period from birth until weaning time in extensive production systems
- Weaning is the process of removing the young animal from its dam (mother), it can also mean removal of the young from a source of milk (as progeny of dairy producing animals are often weaned around the time of birth or soon after and fed on milk)
- Often entails significant handling during management procedures, need to be handled carefully and be old enough to cope e.g. not day old lambs in large mob

Dystocia (difficult birth)

- For most breeding systems, goal is to avoid dystocia
- Will always be some dams who have dystocia, experienced farmers may deal with this or a veterinarian may be called
- Generally done on property, some small ruminants may get transported to a clinic
- Range of equipment to assist with dystocia (ropes, chains, hooks etc)
- Some sort of traction – ropes, pulley, jack etc (but not excessive force)
- Not every young will be able to be born successfully naturally, some will require a caesarean to be born alive
- Once born, young may need further assistance
- Leave mother and young to bond post birth, presuming young is accepted



https://www.bainbridgevet.com.au/category/180-calving-equipment

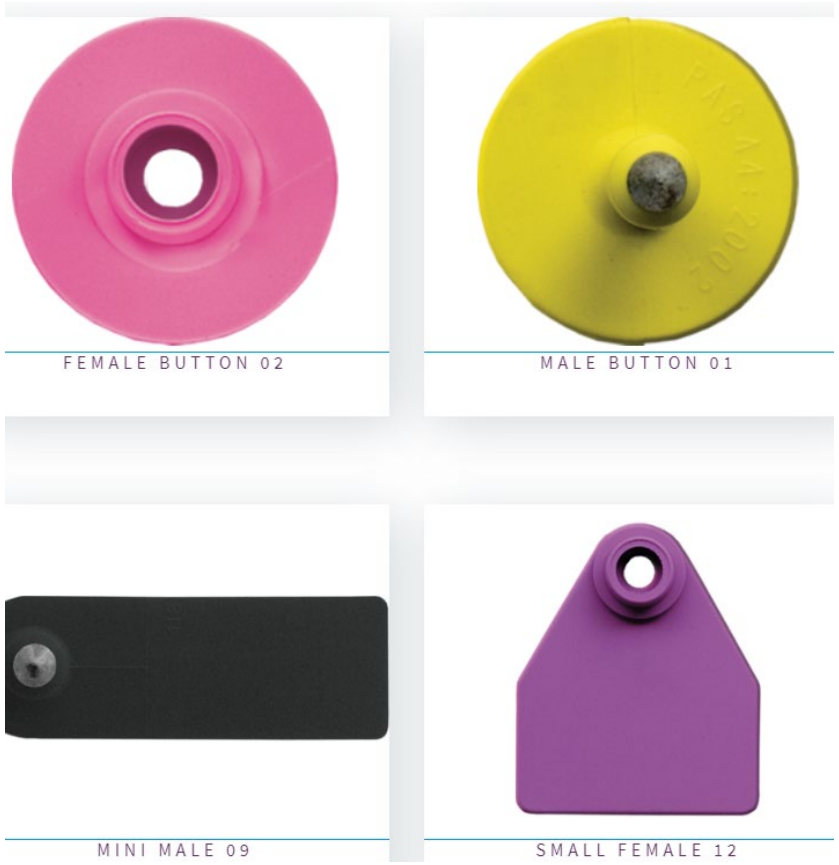
Vaccination

- Commonly used in extensive production systems
- Range of diseases are vaccinated against, varies between farms
- Mostly given by subcutaneous injection high on the neck
- Needle size ranges from 16G yo 20G using ½ inch needle (still using imperial sizing)
- Generally used autodosing vaccine administrator from “pillow pack”
- Most vaccines require “cold chain” & have expiry date
- Generally given without cleaning but avoid post rainfall or we stock

Image from: https://www.zoetis.com.au/livestock-solutions/southern-beef/maximise-reproductive-potential/preventing-reproductive-diseases.aspx

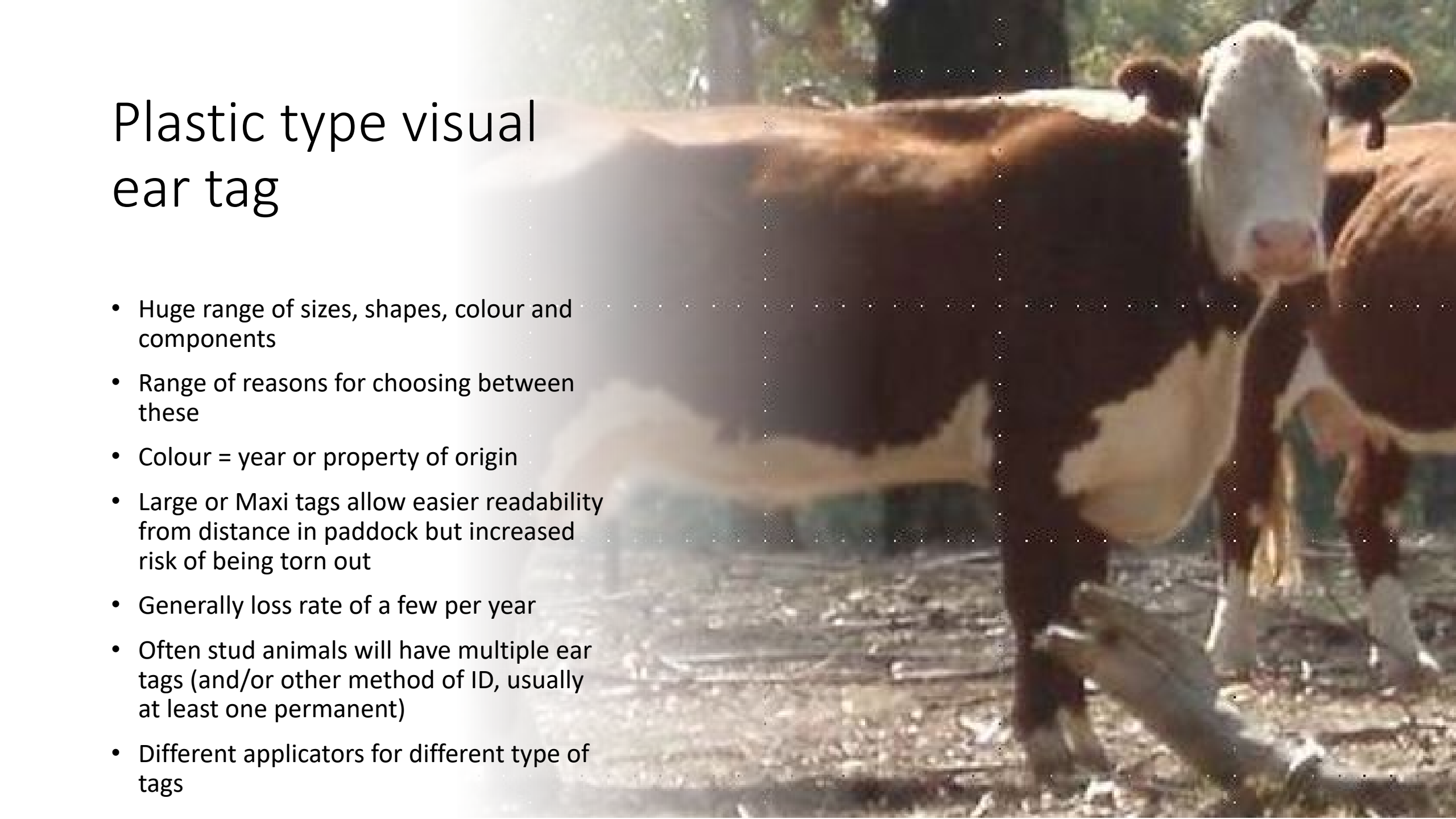
Eartag

- NLIS – must have PIC, some electronic (eID) – before you graduate likely all Australian NLIS = eID
- Tags MUST be fitted prior to stock movement from a farm (both sheep and cattle in Victoria MUST have eID)
- Tag shape/type/brand varies – can be two part (male and female) or single tag
- Purchase from DPI in Victoria
- Tag has NLIS ID and also physical ID (receive an e-file that links these)
- Can read tags using an electronic reader (handheld or panel)
- Can read rapidly, improve precision management eg weighing



https://www.allflex.global/au/product_cat/visual-identification/

Plastic type visual ear tag



- Huge range of sizes, shapes, colour and components
- Range of reasons for choosing between these
- Colour = year or property of origin
- Large or Maxi tags allow easier readability from distance in paddock but increased risk of being torn out
- Generally loss rate of a few per year
- Often stud animals will have multiple ear tags (and/or other method of ID, usually at least one permanent)
- Different applicators for different type of tags

Metal ear tags

- Can be used in extensive livestock
- Most commonly used in small ruminants or in stud cattle
- Small with lower risk of loss
- Different applicator
- May catch a shearing handpiece and damage comb/cutter

Ear Mark

- Varying shapes
- Individual property registered marks
- Still required in WA, not other states
- Permanent property level form of ID

https://www.bainbridgevet.com.au/search/results/6405819153982

Ear tattoo

- Also permanent form of identification (ID)
- More difficult to read, often need to clean the ear
- Same technique as human tattoo – break skin and apply tattoo
- Tattoo applicator (plier) and letters/number/shape with other side of applicator a solid block
- Cuts skin and then ink applied

https://www.livestocking.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/tattooing.jpg

Ring castration

- Range of tools to achieve outcome
- Most commonly small elastic ring (lamb device)
- Placed over testicles and restricts blood flow so testicle tissue sloughs off over a few weeks
- Important to remove both testicles
- Need to use on animals with relatively small testicles so able to stop blood flow
- Pain relief products – NSAID, local anaesthetic & device to apply
- Older calves – Callicrate or California bander or just larger sized ring
- General recommendation = younger is better
- Technique is bloodless but not pain free

Knife castration

- Using a sharp knife to cut skin and remove both testicles
- May also include an emasculator to cut and crush blood vessels
- Need to leave adequate drainage hole in skin to ensure doesn't close too quickly
- Variations to skin cut

https://www.fmb.com.au/livestock-equipment/castrating-equipment/cattle-castrating.html

Burdizzo castration

- Bloodless castration
- Clamp and crush blood vessels through skin (double clamp technique)
- Least commonly used method
- Needs significant expertise

- Also range of research chemical methods for castration but not registered for use

Tail docking

- Routine procedure for sheep, but not other systems
- Optimal length for sheep 3-4 coccygeal joints remaining
  - Reduces breech soiling
  - Reduces prolapse
  - Reduces joint ill
  - Reduces fly strike
- Generally done at marking (castration, ear tag, dock, vaccinate)
- Usually 2-7 weeks of age, may vary with mustering
- Three main methods – ring, gas knife and knife
- Pain relief – local anaesthetic/NSAID

Dehorning/disbudding

- Only needed if animal is not polled
- Difference between dehorning and disbudding is the age it is done
- Early in life = disbudding (before horn connected to skull)
- Polled gene = dominant (generally)
- Simplest method of dehorning = use polled sire (genomics makes this simpler)
- Disbudding in first month of life using either sharp knife or heat (gas/electric)
- Dehorning range of cutting devices
- All causes pain – local anaesthetic/NSAID/anaesthetic (some off label depending on species)
- Deer are a particular case that will be covered in more detail given annual nature