



How to trim a cow's tail

When to trim tail hair

Trimming tails is usually required twice a year. Dirty tails are more problematic during the wet times of the year, so it makes sense to trim the cows' tails once before the onset of the wettest season. Just before calving (when freeze brands are clipped) is also another good time to schedule trimming.

Tails can be trimmed easily and quickly (around 20-45 seconds per tail or less), so this task can be incorporated into the operator's routine, trimming a few tails per milking (or per day) over a given period. Trimming the tails of recently calved cows to indicate that their milk can go into the vat can be a useful management tool.

Alternatively, groups can be done in the dairy or treatment (AI) race.

The key to successful trimming is having the right equipment and a skilled operator.

What to use

Popular tools used for trimming tail hair are shears and electric trimmers (clippers). Other tools available include various types of hand shears. The tools used must be in good working order with well-oiled and sharp blades.



Shears and scissors are relatively inexpensive and simple to use on small numbers of cows.

When using shears or scissors ensure you are aware of the location of the end of the tailbone before cutting the hair.

There is a large range of electric trimmers on the market. They are available as cordless or with a cord.

The cordless trimmers are easy to operate and make the task quick to perform. They are especially handy when access to power points is limited or the working area is wet.



Electric trimmers make trimming large numbers quick and simple.

Shoof International have also produced **The TailWell™ Power Tail Trimmer**.

The TailWell™ Power Tail Trimmer is available from most rural supplies stores. Trimming takes only 3 or 4 seconds per tail, and is easily accomplished during milking. The outer blade oscillates over a fixed inner blade, so there is no risk of injury to man or cow. Pre-cutting of the tail switch is not necessary, even if it is very dirty.



The TailWell™ Power Tail Trimmer

Simple steps to trim the tail using clippers

Step 1



It is easier to trim a clean tail. Dirty tails can still be trimmed, but it will take longer. Before trimming commences, ensure equipment is in working order and the work area is safe.

Step 2



Holding the brush securely with one hand, operate the trimmer in an upward direction – starting near the point where the brush meets the tail – and travelling close to the base of the hair. Use long strokes.

Step 3



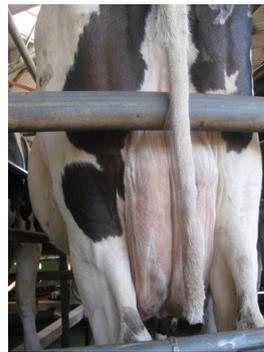
Repeat the action, gradually making your way around the tail.

Step 4



Use the trimmers in a downward motion to trim the brush of the tail. Carefully repeat the action, gradually making your way around the brush.

The fully trimmed tail



Related tail docking fact sheets

1. Myths about tail docking
2. Alternatives to tail docking

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