

## **To Implant or Not to Implant**

Implants for beef cows were designed to improve rate and/or efficiency of gain. There are currently two forms of implants, estrogenic implants and estrogenic with androgenic implants containing trembolone acetate. Estrogenic implants promote improved feed efficiency. These implants have been shown to increase feed efficiency by 5-10% and increase daily gains by 5-15%. Androgenic implants increase muscle growth. Androgenic implants have an additive effect with estrogenic implants and can further increase feed efficiency by 2-3 % and daily gains by 5%. Implants that are properly administered can return \$10 for every \$1 spent on implants. Estrogenic implants administered to yearling cattle in the feedlot will return \$5 for every \$1 price of a bushel of corn. For example, if corn cost \$4.00/bu, implanting can return \$20.00.

Implants in the United States are extremely safe for cattle, for producers and for the consumer. They have become a tool in every segment of the industry that can widen our profit margin by increasing gains and efficiency with little input cost. However, there are some considerations you need to be aware of. Breeding stock should not be implanted to avoid any reproductive interactions. Calves under the age of 45 d should not be implanted. Implants must be administered in the ear between the ribs of the ear in the middle 1/3 of ear (ie. reason for discounts on calves with frozen ears).

Implant efficacy depends highly upon proper placement and administration. The major problems with implants are expelled pellets, crushed pellets, missing pellets, bunched pellets, and cartilage embedment. Be very selective of the person you choose to administer this product, your profit depends on it. Sanitation can help to minimize the risk of abscesses. Clean the ear with an antimicrobial such as Nolvasan, prior to administering the implant and wipe the needle with a non-irritating antiseptic after each implant is given. Talk to your local veterinarian for antiseptic selection and dilution.

Implants are most commonly used several times over the course of a calf's lifetime. Implant can be given at the time of branding, again at weaning and 2-3 times while in the feed yard. Re-implant schedules should be established by taking into consideration targeted finish date, grade price spread, genetic potential of the cattle and the feeding program.

Implants can have affect on carcass quality and palatability, particularly when the implanting schedules were not designed to match the age, weight, genetics, and nutritional management of the cattle. Heavy carcasses have been reported when long yearling were implanted during the finishing state. Poor yield grades have been reported in heifers that were implanted with an androgenic implant while also being fed MGA. Vaginal prolapses have also been reported when cattle are implanted and ate a ration high in estrogenic compounds such as molds and estrogenic legumes.

Implants are a safe tool that drastically decreases cost of gain and increases feed efficiency. They promote lean tissue deposition while keeping fat deposition rate slow. If sequential implanting occurs from ranch to feedlot, there is a potential of increasing 125 lbs of weight and the value by \$93.00 per head. However, keep in mind that implanted cattle are not eligible for All Natural Programs and some cattle buyers discourage the use of implants on the ranch because feed yards loose out on some of the compensatory gain. Implantation requires careful planning, administration and placement. If used correctly, implants have the potential to put more money in your pocket.

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