

### Implanting Nursing Calves - Adds Pounds and Money

Implanting nursing calves with a growth stimulant is one of the most economically justifiable practices available in the beef industry. Implanting returns more revenue per dollar invested than any other management practice. Despite being approved for more than 50 years, only 33 percent of cow/calf producers use growth-promoting implants.

Implants have shown to increase weaning weights of nursing calves in hundreds of research trials. Implants have been proven to improve gains by 4 to 5 percent, according to research from Oklahoma State University. This could translate to an additional 18-20 pounds of weaning weight. Put another way, it means every \$1 - \$2 spent on implants will result in approximately a \$54 to \$60 return for producers selling calves at weaning.

Implants can be quickly administered at branding, castration and along with calfhood vaccinations.

None of the implants approved for nursing calves are approved for calves less than 30-45 days of age. One implant between 2 months of age and weaning has been shown to have little impact on future productive performance of heifers. However, little benefit has been shown as well. Therefore, any heifers identified for replacements prior to branding should not be implanted. Bull calves should not be implanted, as it can negatively impact reproductive development. Calves destined for a natural or organic market should not be implanted.

Calves must have adequate nutrition to realize improved daily gains from an implant. Spring born calves nursing good milking cows and on good nutritious grass pasture should have sufficient nutrition for optimum implant response.

The best way to realize the benefits of an implantation strategy is to read and follow label instructions and recommended guidelines. Implant strategies should always start with the least aggressive implants for nursing calves. Ralgro®, Compudose®, Encore®, Component E-C®, and Synovex C® are low potency implants approved for nursing calves. Choose the correct implant for your situation.

Proper placement and handling of the implant is imperative for the correct payout to occur. Implants should be placed in the middle third of the ear between the skin and the cartilage, making sure to avoid hitting the blood vessels in the ear. The needle should be disinfected (Nolvasan® is a good example) after each use to prevent abscesses which will reduce the implant response. If the ear has dirt or fecal matter it should be wiped clean prior to implant insertion. For best results avoid crushing or bunching the implant pellets in the ear and make sure the implant is placed in the ear before pulling the needle out so part of the implant is not lost.

Implants complement good management but do not compensate for poor management. They do not make up for poor genetics, poor management or improper nutrition. Implanting nursing

calves is a safe, economical management tool available to cow/calf producers to maximize returns.

Management questions to consider:

Am I using technology such as implants to improve my cow herd revenue?

Do I use proper implant techniques to increase implant effectiveness?

Am I getting the most return from my implants?

Do I have good management practices in place to enhance my implants?

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