

Growth Implants for Beef Calves

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No other single management procedure offers as much cost effectiveness as the proper use of a growth implant in young calves. Implants have been shown to increase daily gains 10 to 20% and feed efficiency 5 to 10%. There are several implants that are approved for use in various classes of cattle but for suckling calves the choices are: Component E-C, Compudose, Encore, Ralgro and Synovex-C. Carefully read the label to be sure the implant is suitable for your situation.

To get the maximum benefit from the use of growth implants, nutrition should not be lacking. In other words, growth implants will not make up for poor nutrition. Nursing calves will respond well if the cow milks well and good forage or creep feed is available for older calves.

It is not uncommon to increase weaning weights by 15 to 20 pounds in implanted calves. Given the current calf prices and the fact that most of these implants cost

slightly more than \$1.00 each this is an extremely cost effective management tool. A good time to implant the calves is when you castrate them, which should be done as early as possible. A specific example of the value of implants can be shown by data that was collected at the Gulf Coast Research and Extension Center in Fairhope, AL a few years ago. Twenty steer calves were implanted on January 9th, while 19 of their herd mates were not implanted. They were weighed on May 21st to collect BCIA weaning data and the implanted steers weighed 699 pounds and the non-implanted steers weighed 659 pounds. In January they weighed 264 pounds and 267 pounds, respectively.

If your entire calf crop will be sold as feeder calves then the entire crop should be implanted; however, if the heifers are to be retained as replacement breeding stock then it is best not to implant those calves. There are implants approved for use in re-

placement heifers and they have very important guidelines for use associated with them. In general, it is probably best to only implant the steer calves if you are using the heifers as replacements. Likewise, implants are not suitable for use in bulls.

Like many other management procedures, the degree of success with an implanting program is related to proper implanting technique. The accompanying picture shows proper placement of a growth implant in a calf's ear. It should be placed under the skin in the middle one-third of the ear. Restrain the calf's head and do not get in a hurry. The bevel of the implant needle should be facing up when inserted under the skin of the ear. Once the needle has been inserted depress the plunger of the implant gun and withdraw the needle in a simultaneous motion such that the implant lies in the hole vacated by the needle. Crushed implants or those inserted into the cartilage will not be effective. Feel to make sure that the implant has been properly placed. Several new designs for implant guns have been developed with self-retracting needles. Always use clean sharp needles and follow label directions.

Extensive data show that implants in beef cattle pose no health hazard to consumers. Their safety is well documented and there is no withdrawal period prior to slaughter.

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