



Cattle Tech Talk: Use Of A Blood Test For Pregnancy Checking

This information is to help keep you current with trends that are occurring in the cattle industry that could affect the window for cattle movement and/or vaccination schedules. This should in no way be considered an endorsement or recommendation for one pregnancy testing procedure over another.

The technology to use a blood sample to determine pregnancy status in cows and heifers was developed by Dr. Garth Sasser, University of Idaho. He discovered a Pregnancy Specific Protein B, produced by the placenta and detectable in a blood sample. The test is quoted as being accurate at 30 days or less of pregnancy. The name of the company is Bio Tracking and the blood test is called BioPRYN. They are establishing labs across the country; and reportedly, there are now more than 15 labs in the U.S. and Canada.

The BioPRYN test is currently being used in breeding herds and dairies, but in this current article (*Feedlot*, August 2007) Feedlot Health Management Services at Okotoks, Alberta, CA is looking at using it at arrival on feedlot heifers. The reason being, a veterinarian is not always available to palpate or ultrasound in-coming heifers.

Palpation usually requires 45 or more day pregnancies to detect, the cost is equivalent to palpating, the turn-around time is fast, and pregnant animals can be dealt with in a timely manner.

In breeding and dairy herds, several advantages are quoted as being unique to the BioPRYN test. Many producers are using the test on heifers 30 days after pulling bulls (or synchronization and AI) to realize top market "open heifer" prices on those that are not pregnant. Others are using the BioPRYN test a couple of weeks prior to turning clean-up bulls in, to determine whether the calf is from AI or live cover.

There is also an operation that runs a feeding program for cull cows that uses the BioPRYN test to enable them to sell or pasture the pregnant cows rather than slaughter them. This same operation, after using the BioPRYN test for one year, said that they found 35 to 40 percent of cows called open by veterinarians doing palpation (cows bred within 2 months prior to palpation) were actually pregnant.

Source: Boehringer Ingelheim