

The importance of pregnancy test in cattle farming

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The importance of pregnancy test for cattle is the key to profitability for all breeds. It is the best instrument to reach a high reproductive efficiency.

Pregnancy testing allows to monitor reproductive efficiency and to detect problems at an early stage.

How to do it?

Rectal palpation is the cheapest and most efficient method for pregnancy testing cattle. Using this method it is possible to identify pregnant cows as early as six weeks after conception. This method allows to feel the calf in the uterus, as well as its shape, and the pulse of the artery supplying blood to it. Rectal palpation is usually done 8-10 weeks after mating or artificial insemination. Cows need to be restrained and the palpation should be performed by a veterinarian or by an experienced veterinary technician.

Ultrasound can detect pregnancy earlier than palpation, sometimes as early as 13 days after mating (but more commonly after 21 days), but is more expensive and requires equipment and electricity. It can provide more information than palpation, such as viability of the fetus, incidence of twins, and sex of the fetus (already since 60-90 days of gestation).

Blood test - Several tests using progesterone measurements in blood and milk have been developed to confirm pregnancy. The main one is called BioPRYN (Pregnant Ruminant Yes/No) for cattle and other ruminants that became commercially available in 2002. There are now many laboratories worldwide performing pregnancy tests on blood

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samples.

[Dr. Steve Hendrick of Coaldale](#) said *“Blood testing has a place, particularly for herds that are remote and far from a veterinary service”*.

The disadvantage of the blood test is that the farmer must wait two or three days for the results. This is a problem if you need to make sudden decisions on which cows to keep or cull.

What are the benefits of pregnancy test?

More cash in your pocket

The first benefit as said by [Les Anderson, University of Kentucky Extension beef specialist](#), is: *“compare the roughly \$5/head cost of a pregnancy exam with the \$100-200/head cost of hay alone to feed an open cow through the winter, and pregnancy testing quickly pays for itself”*.

Pregnancy testing allows you to accurately identify not only pregnant cows but also unproductive females that can be culled from the herd. An empty cow means no income or cash flow.

Tight calving interval

In many cases, your veterinarian can give you an approximate foetal age and likely calving date following rectal palpation. Overall, this will

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help general herd management and can improve control of your calving success.

Disease Control

A major advantage you have by pregnancy testing your herd is to promptly identify any potential reproductive diseases. Early detection of reproductive diseases and their management can save from huge losses.