

BET ON NON-PREGNANT FEMALES!



The Presence of Pregnant Females at Specialized Auctions: An Issue for the Beef Industry?

Compared to males, females perform less in a feedlot and have a lower average daily gain which partly explains the price difference between sexes. Dealing with many unintentional pregnancies reduces the interest of feeders for females. A decrease in demand results in a decrease in price.

What is the impact on a fed cattle producer?

The consequences can be both financial and logistical for steer producers:

- Feedlots are not suitable for calving or for the presence of newborn calves.
- Metabolic disorders and calving complications can lead to costly veterinary fees or mortality for both female and calf.
- Pregnant females have higher nutritional requirements, resulting in increased feed costs and reduced profitability.
- Pregnant females sold to a slaughterhouse results in a decrease in their value.

How to Avoid Unintentional Pregnancy?

To avoid marketing pregnant females at specialized auctions, it is essential that feeder calf producers implement a strict management protocol.

Method	Advantage
Gender Separation	Simple and effective Before the first heat: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Separate males and females• Remove the bull
Melengestrol Acetate	Feed additive for females that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suppresses oestrus• Increases gain• Improves feed conversion

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How to Identify Pregnant Females?

Method	Benefit	Disadvantage
Transrectal palpation (35 to 50 days)	+ Low cost	– Requires training or a veterinarian – Depending on the individual, less accurate and not as reliable as ultrasound
Ultrasound (25 to 30 days)	+ Accurate + Reliable	– Requires expensive equipment or a veterinarian – Costly
Blood test (28 to 30 days)	+ Reliable + More affordable than ultrasound + No need for a veterinarian	– Less accurate than ultrasound – Test results may be vague

The cost of each identification method will depend on the facilities available and the number of females tested.

How To Terminate an Unintentional Pregnancy?

The decision to abort a female must be taken with care and only after assessing all options and possible consequences. The unintentional pregnancy management protocol and prescription must be provided by a veterinarian. To ensure the efficiency of the intervention, it is necessary to choose the method according to the stage of gestation. The following methods are commonly used to terminate unintentional pregnancies:

- **Prostaglandins (e.g., Bioestrovet, Estroplan, Lutalyse or Estrumate)**
- **Dexamethasone (in combination with prostaglandins)**



Before the females leave the farm, it is important to ensure that the interruption has been successful, as the effectiveness of each of these methods is not guaranteed, especially after 120 days of gestation. The interruption of a pregnancy and the resulting stress can weaken the immune system in females, making them more prone to respiratory problems such as the Bovine Respiratory Syncytial Virus (BRSV). Preventing pregnancies is always preferable to interrupting them. This is an issue of health, animal welfare, financial stability, and social acceptability of cattle production. **Only non-pregnant females should be delivered to specialized auctions!**

Source: UNIVERSITY of NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

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