

Dairy Details

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Stop Playing the Guessing Game

These days when you work in the cattle industry, we are regularly reminded about responsible antibiotic use. And rightly so! If we want to continue to use the drugs we have in the manner we are accustomed to, we have to use them right. A part of that is administering the correct dose. Dosages are based on body weight. But, how accurate are we when determining a cow's weight?

So, you are going to treat a cow with Polyflex? Does every cow on your farm get the same dose? Or, do you make a visual estimate of her weight and administer the "big cow" or "little cow" dose? When cattle in the same barn can vary by as much as 500#, "eyeballing" weights will ultimately lead to under or overdosing antibiotics.

Obviously, under-dosing antibiotics can decrease effectiveness. What does this cost the farm? Increased drug and labor costs due to poor treatment response and the need for retreating. Future relapses and lost production, culling or even death may also happen.

Overdosing antibiotics greatly increases the risk milk and/or meat residues. There is also increased treatment costs due to use of excess product.

So, here are some other options for capturing a cow's weight other than eyeballing a guess...

Cattle Scale

Investing in a scale is the most accurate way to capture individual cow



weights. Knowing animal weights can be valuable for more than determining medication dosages. Transition cow programs can be monitored by weighing cows at dry-off, freshening and one month post-freshening. Weight fluctuations during these periods can signal potential metabolic issues, requiring changes to the transition program. Calf birth and weaning weights could also be monitored more accurately with a scale. A good goal to have is to double a calf's birth weight within the first 60 days of life. If your calf feeding program is "up to snuff", that goal can easily be attained and your calves will be off to a great start towards a productive future.



Weight Tape

A weight tape can be used for everything described above, but it isn't quite as accurate. However, it is still a valuable tool and is

certainly better than just "eye-balling" weights. For best results, position the tape correctly as shown in the picture just behind the shoulders. Also use a tape that is appropriate for the animals you are measuring, i.e. dairy vs beef, Holstein vs Jersey. Whether a tape gives you a weight estimate that is higher or lower than actual weight, using it regularly will give you an accurate assessment of weight changes over time.

Cull cow weights

If you sell cull cows through a sales barn, you can keep track of their weight. Try writing down your eyeball guess when cows get on the truck, and then compare your numbers with the sales barn weights. After several months, you will find your guesses getting closer!

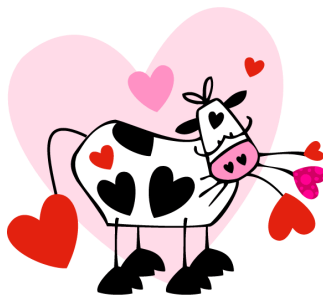
As producers of meat and milk, we are responsible for a clean, safe food supply. Accurate body weights allow for the precise antibiotic dosing and responsible antibiotic use necessary to produce a pure product.

Product Spotlight: Replenish



Replenish is a new calf electrolyte that comes in a liquid form, rather than a powder form, that is mixed with water. It is one of the few electrolytes on the market that has the correct osmolality (concentration of particles) and buffering agents for acidotic calves.

This product is great for calves that are scouring, dehydrated, slow to drink milk, and/or show signs of weakness or stress. Calves seem to really like the taste and often drink it on their own from a bottle or pail. Being one of our favorite calf products, we'd love to share more info about Replenish with you! Contact one of our veterinarians if you would like to incorporate this product into your calf treatment protocols.



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