

## Dairy steers grow faster with help from implants

UNIVERSITY PARK — Weight gains of dairy steers on pasture can be increased by as much as 18 per cent with the growth stimulant Zeranol, reports Earl M. Kesler, dairy scientist at Penn State.

The finding could increase a dairy farmer's income from sale of calves, Kesler said. He and associates note a trend toward greatly increased numbers of dairy calves being raised as feeder animals.

The calf market for beef is strong, he noted, with consumer demand increasing for hamburger-type beef. In addition, a new grading system for beef reduces previous downgrading based on an animal's conformation or body type.

The growth stimulant is sold as Ralgro. Earlier studies showed this product to be effective in increasing the growth of beef cattle, especially where the animals were fed intensively.

Weight gains of implanted steers averaged 1.7 pounds per day in the Penn State experiments, it was stated. The range of weight gain went from 1.2 to 1.9 pounds—depending on rainfall and quality of pasture.

Total gain per animal during a pasture season ranged from 142 to 367 pounds, depending on the season and available grass.

"Steers on pasture require

very little attention and labor," Dr. Kesler commented. "Such grazing on surplus pasture, above all, is an excellent way to convert grass to meat. There is, of course, the ever present possibility of losses due to injury, infection, theft, and the like."

Animals initially weighing about 1000 pounds responded similarly to implants as did 500 pound calves. While body weights improved significantly with the implant, skeletal growth

showed no difference between steers implanted with Ralgro and steers not implanted.

The experiments were carried out over three seasons, using mostly Holstein steers. They were grazed rotationally on permanent pastures consisting of grasses, small amounts of legumes, and weeds. The quality and amount of pasture was considered adequate to excellent, Kesler said.

Implants stimulated

weight gains in four trials conducted over three grazing seasons. In three trials the calves were 8 to 9 months old and averaged about 530 pounds initially. Half were implemented with 36 milligrams of Ralgro in the right ear.

In two of the summers, the

test group was reimplanted—one season after 89 days on trial and the next season after 135 days on test.

Steers in the fourth trial were 17 months old and averaged 1040 pounds at the start. They were implanted once since the season was only 118 days.

Care should be taken to be certain the implant is placed properly in the ear, Kesler cautioned. Follow directions on the package or use the services of a veterinarian.

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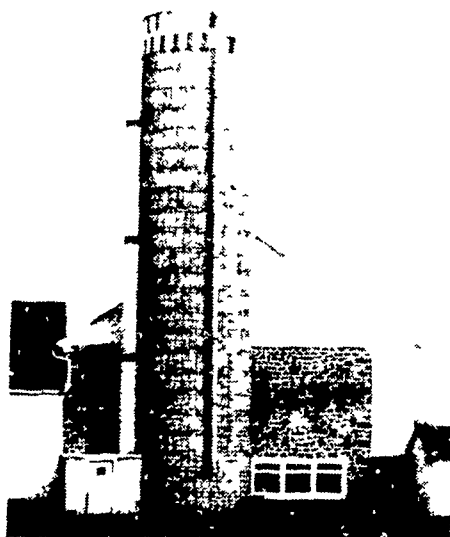


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