

# Beef Briefs

by  
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## IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR Fly Control

Horn and face flies are the most typical pests in our region. They are historically difficult to control because of the ready source of a reproductive environment (fresh manure) in free-ranging, grazing cattle.

Following are some methods for control with some advantages and disadvantages.

- **Direct application:** This will be the most effective control at a single point in time, but these sprays and foggers generally do not last long enough. Therefore, the life cycle of the flies will not be sufficiently interrupted without

frequent treatments.

- **Rubs:** Like direct applications, frequent applications are necessary for effective control. Insecticide-impregnated face and back rubs can be effective controls as long as there is a consistent supply of material available in the rubs and when the cattle consistently use them. They should be placed in resting areas and around feed and water sources so the cattle will use them. They should probably not be placed inside a barn because neither horn or face flies will stay inside a barn.

- **Larvacides:** These materials are either fed to the animals through a mineral or grain feed, or

are dosed to them as a bolus that has a slow release in the rumen. The chemical agent in the larvacide prevents the growth of the fly while developing in the manure pile. They do nothing to control adult flies, particularly if cattle across a fence or nearby have not been controlled with a larvacide. They can be an effective part of a control program that includes other forms of control, such as direct application of insecticides.

- **Insecticidal ear tags:** The use of insecticide ear tags is still effective in our region since few resistances to the insecticides have been found. There are three major categories of insecticides used in tags, and the category of material should be rotated annually. These include organophosphates, synthetic pyrethroids, and combinations of the two. One tag per animal is usually sufficient. They can be used in combination with a larvacide. The tags should be removed at the end of the fly season to help prevent resistance.

- **Pour-ons:** Some of the effective insecticides are now available in a long-lasting, pour-on delivery product. Check with your animal

supply dealer to see what is available.

It is also recommended that the use of larvacides and insecticidal ear tags be delayed until mid-summer if possible since peak fly populations in this area will usually be in August.

### Bull Use

Remember, the easiest way to control the management of a beef herd is through controlled, condensed calving seasons. This allows the most effective nutrition, health, and marketing to occur.

Bulls should be prepared for turnout by making sure they are healthy and in good physical shape. New bulls should have a breeding soundness examination if at all possible.

Unfortunately, there are few veterinarians in the state that are equipped for this examination. The bull to cow ratio will help insure that calves are born early in the calving season because the cows are bred when they cycle the first time. This increases weaning weights and rebreeding rates next year.

Yearling bulls should be limited to 15 cows, 2-year-olds to 30 cows, and mature bulls to 45 cows. Many bulls can service more cows in the breeding season, but the loss of breeding for one heat cycle can result in 30-40 pounds less calf to sell. Another

perspective is that a bull asked to breed 60 cows in 60 days will have to average a mating per day. When there are two cows in heat, most bulls will be able to handle it. But when there are three, or when there are environmental problems such as a week of hot, humid weather, there will usually be fewer pounds of calf to sell or there will be an open cow.

### Calf Management

Calf management now can make a real difference in the dollars they return later. Castrate the males with a knife, at an early age (less than two months of age), to help reduce the distress of the practice. Any advantage of waiting and allowing the calf to remain a bull to capture the growth advantage of bulls can be compromised by the recovery period from castration at an older age.

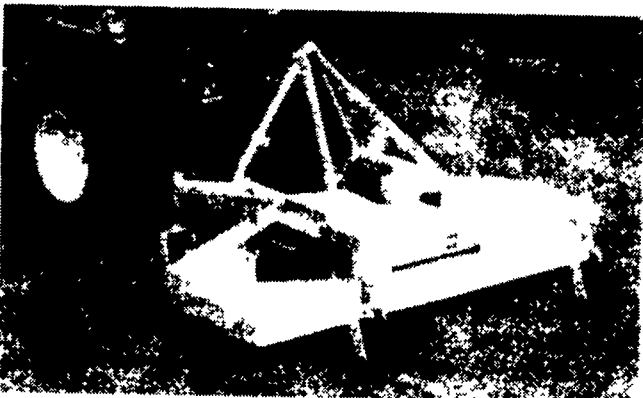
Identify the calves to match the cow identification so the less productive cows can be identified and culled. Use implants in the calves that will not be used for breeding.

At any reasonable growth rate the implant can have a 8X return rate. In areas where blackleg is a problem, vaccinate calves with a clostridial vaccine. There are several good ones available, including those that are a subcutaneous, 2-cc dose. Booster them at weaning.

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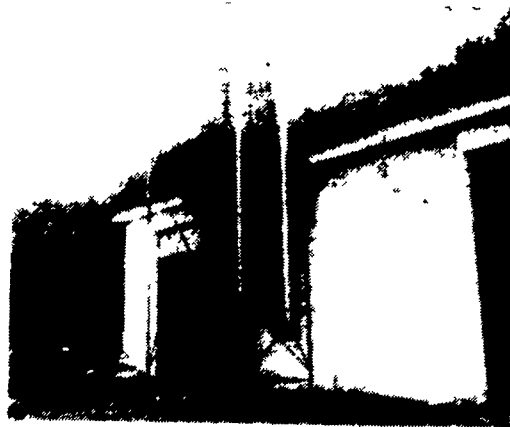
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