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Aborting Feedlot Heifers with Alfavet® or Bovilene®¹

Scott Laudert,² Garth Boyd,
and Gerry Kuhl

Summary

Alfavet® (alfaprostol), an experimental prostaglandin analog for inducing abortion in feedlot heifers, was evaluated for efficacy. Abortion was induced within 8 days following injection of 5 mg alfaprostol in 45 of 51 heifers (88.2%) ranging from 40 to 150 days in gestation. Bovilene® (fenprostalene), injected at 1 mg per head resulted in abortion in 45 of 49 heifers (91.8%) of similar pregnancy status. Both products were 95-100% effective from 40 to 120 days of pregnancy, but only 75% effective from 121 to 150 days.

Introduction

Pregnant feedlot heifers continue to be a serious economic problem. In the past few years, several drugs have been introduced that induce abortion. This trial was conducted to measure the safety and efficacy of a new abortion-inducing drug for feedlot heifers.

Experimental Procedures

One hundred yearling heifers from 40 to 150 days pregnant were used to compare the efficacy of Alfavet® (alfaprostol) and Bovilene® (fenprostalene) as abortifacients. Each product was administered to alternate heifers found by rectal palpation to be within the following gestation-day ranges: less than 90 days, 91 to 120 days, and 121 to 150 days. Dosage and injection routes were 5 ml (5 mg) alfaprostol, intermuscularly or 2 ml (1 mg) fenprostalene, subcutaneously. All heifers were penned together and observed for complications. Eight days following injection, each heifer was repalpated to determine pregnancy status.

Results

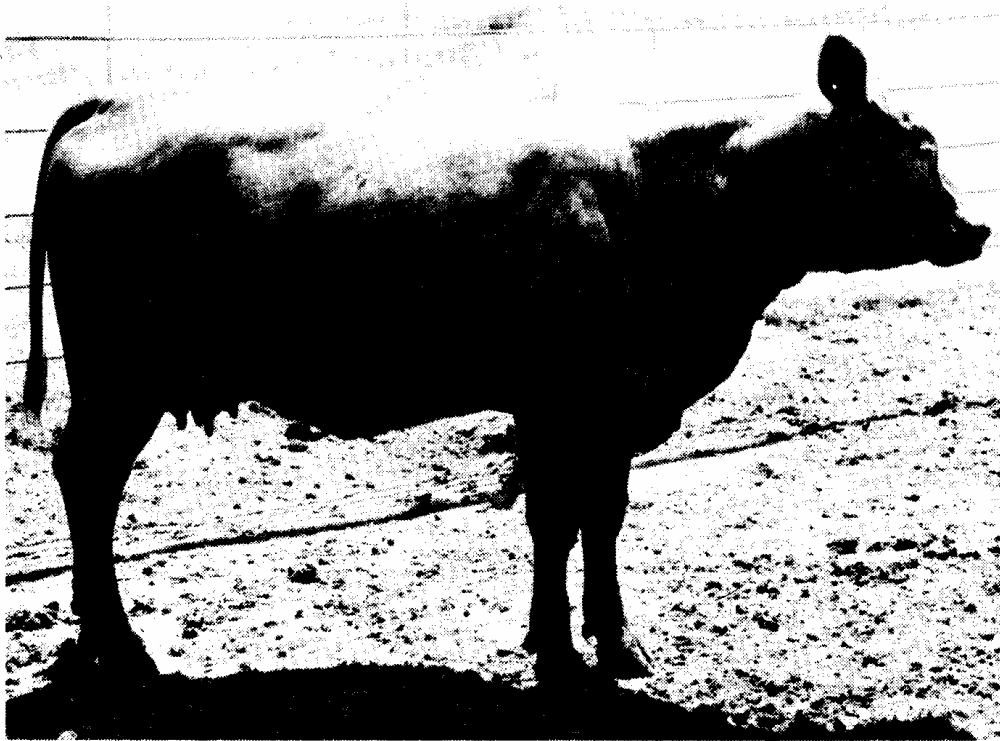
No differences in abortion percentages were detected between the two products (Table 11.1). Both products displayed excellent efficacy on fetuses less than 120 days old. Both products were about 75% effective on fetuses from 121 to 150 days old. The results of this trial agree with other published work on the efficacy of Bovilene®.

¹Appreciation is expressed to Grant County Feeders, Ulysses, KS for supplying cattle and facilities and to Hoffmann-LaRoche, Inc., Nutley, NJ for support. Alfavet® is not yet approved for use.

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Table 11.1. Efficacy of Alfavet® and Bovilene® as Abortifacients for Feedlot Heifers 150 or Fewer Days Pregnant

Item	Alfavet®				Bovilene®			
	121-150	91-120	40-90	40-150	121-150	91-120	40-90	40-150
	days				days			
No. Heifers	18	13	20	51	17	13	19	49
Avg. Days Preg.	142	110	74	107	142	103	75	106
No. Aborted	13	13	19	45	13	13	19	45
% Aborted	72.2	100	95.0	88.2	76.5	100	100	91.8



The pregnant feedlot heifer is more than just a nuisance; she's an economic liability to both the feeder and the packer. If she calves in the lot, she loses valuable pounds, and runs a serious risk of health problems. If she's still pregnant at slaughter, she's a dressing percent disaster, so she sells grade-and-yield, or at a severe discount. Either way, she spells red ink for the entire cattle industry.