when used properly, growth-stimulating implants offer the commercial cow-calf producer a fast, easy-to-use method of increasing weaning weight of calves. Implants have been proven effective through research and through use in the beef industry.

Implants are placed under the skin on the back of the ear. They exert a positive effect by increasing growth hormone and insulin, resulting in increased formation of muscle tissue and decreased fat. Growth hormone is naturally produced by the pituitary gland and is an important regulator of growth.

As a general recommendation, implant male calves when they are castrated. Do not implant bull calves you intend to save for breeding. Implanting bulls can prevent the development of reproductive organs, causing sterility.

Administer implants properly. The implant’s potential effect cannot be realized if administered improperly. An improperly implanted calf runs the risk of residues when slaughtered.

Administer Implant Correctly

1. Properly restrain the animal.
2. Determine which ear you want to implant and adjust the implant instrument so the needle can be positioned next to and parallel to the ear, with the slant side of the needle facing outward. Implant all calves in the same ear to minimize confusion.
3. Select the proper implant site on the back of the ear (Figure 12). Place the implant between the skin and cartilage in the middle third of the ear.
4. Clean the needle and implant site with a disinfectant to reduce contamination of the needle wound (lay the implant gun on a paint tray and sponge).
5. Grasp the ear with one hand while the other hand positions the instrument parallel to and nearly flush with, the ear. Put the point of the needle against the ear with the beveled part facing outward.
6. Use the tip of the needle to prick the skin, lift slightly and completely insert the needle under the skin.
7. Depress the plunger of the implant gun and withdraw the needle.
8. Feel the ear for the implant under the skin to see that it is inserted properly.

Precautions When Implanting

- When the ear is grasped and the needle inserted, the animal may throw its head. This can be prevented by using a nose lead, halter or a headgate equipped with a head and nose bar.
- Avoid piercing or cutting ear veins with the needle.
- Do not allow the needle to gouge or pierce through the cartilage. If you feel resistance as you insert the needle, it is quite probable that the cartilage has been gouged and pellets may be covered with scar tissue and “walled off,” resulting in very poor drug absorption and decreased gain.
- Never sacrifice careful implantation technique for speed.
- All implants come with instructions for implanting and proper handling. Review all instructions carefully before implanting.
Zero Defect Implanting
Critical Control Points

Critical Control Point #1 Sanitation

Site of implantation
- Classify ears as clean or dirty.
- Clean, dry ear: cleaning optional; follow procedure below, if desired.
- Dirty ear:
  Step 1. Scrape surface contamination with serrated knife.
  Step 2. Using a clean sponge, wash implant site with antiseptic solution (diluted chlorhexidine mixed at recommended dilution rate).
  Step 3. Using a wire brush in clean antiseptic solution, make two to three brush strokes in one direction at site of implantation.

Implanting equipment
- Implanting gun should be cleaned prior to use. Wash in warm water.
- Implants should be stored in clean container.
- Place disinfectant solution (diluted) in a disinfecting tray with clean sponge or rollers.
- Prior to implanting, needle should be wiped across sponge or rollers to remove hair and contaminants.
- Operator should wear latex gloves.

Work area
- Work area should be kept clean and supplies arranged in an orderly fashion.

Critical Control Point #2 Operator Training

- Operator must be trained on proper operation and techniques used with the various implanting devices.
- Implanting must be restricted to operators who have been given sufficient time to build skill level in the implanting procedure.
- Back-up implanting operator should be available.

Critical Control Point #3 Implanting Procedure

Step 1. Clean and prepare implant site according to outlined procedure above.
Step 2. Insert the needle at the outer 1/3 of ear.
Step 3. Insert needle between the skin and cartilage (avoid digging into cartilage).
Step 4. Deposit implant in the middle one-third of the ear. Withdraw needle.
  Check implant by running thumb over site. Pinch implant insertion site while giving a gentle push to assure implant is not located at the insertion site.

Critical Control Point #4 Implant Quality Control Verification

- Two to three weeks after processing, check ears for defects in a random sample.
- Also conduct regular chute-side evaluations during implanting.
- Review results with implanting personnel.
- Implement ongoing training program for new personnel.

For more information about VetLife products, the economic impact of improper implanting and VetLife ZDI services, call 888-462-3493, or visit our web site at www.vetlife.com.