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Ultrasound was the next technology that came out and there are several benefits to it as well. First, it is the most accurate of the three technologies at estimating fetal age, and it is the most accurate for assessing fetal viability (because a heartbeat can be detected very early). Twins can sometimes be detected,

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fetal sexing can be done between days 55 and 80, and diagnosis can be done earlier in my hands (30 days vs. 45 days).

The drawback to ultrasound is that it is more time consuming and depending on how much of this information you want, can become more costly.



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The most recent technology that has come out is the Bio-PRYN test which measures Pregnancy-Specific Protein-B (PSPB) in the blood. A fetus's placenta produces this protein and it can be measured in the blood around day 28 with a fair amount of accuracy.

The advantages to this test are that the cost is reasonable (about \$3.00 per animal by the time you include supplies to collect the sample and shipping), and it can be done without a veterinarian so there is no farm call to pay and no veterinary fees.

While this may sound like the way to go, there are several limitations to this test that make it less appealing for most producers that have any number of animals. First, if the cow or heifer is less than 90 days post-calving, this test may give you a false positive due to residual PSPB from the previous pregnancy. Secondly, it cannot diagnose uterine problems that give you a clue as to why the cow is open (not cycling, uterine infection, cystic ovaries, etc.). Thirdly, there is an obvious time lapse in getting results

therefore chuteside decisions about culling animals cannot be made and the animals must be handled again (thus producing a "cost" for your time). Fourthly, if done early, the company recommends retesting at 70-80 days since most early embryonic deaths occur in the first 60 days of gestation (thus adding to the cost if you choose to do this).

Lastly, I do want to touch on one drawback to the Bio-PRYN testing that is perhaps the most important in my opinion. If you use this technology and you collect and mail the samples yourself, you lose the interaction with your veterinarian on an annual or semi-annual basis that is critical to maintaining a positive working relationship. Herd health visits, where pregnancy determination is performed by a veterinarian, allows an opportunity for your veterinarian to answer any questions you have and allows your veterinarian to get an idea of your production goals, nutrition program, management practices, etc. and may bring to your attention some problems or concerns in your herd that you are unaware of.

In addition, it allows an opportunity to practice preventative medicine which hopefully decreases the number of emergencies that you have with your herd.

For the first time ever this year, I had producers wanting me to find more open cows due to the high cull cow prices. With cull cow prices forecasted to stay high, consider all three options for identifying these animals in your herd and decide which one makes the most economic sense for your herd. And certainly, if you have any questions about which one is right for you, please don't hesitate to call and discuss it with us.



My only thought was...this would never work in America! Headgates as a way to restrain cattle are way too progressive for an area of the world where "restraint" means roping a cow's back legs, pulling her tail, and proceeding to lay her down then sitting on her. It is amazing what we learned to do with a cow lying down that I would not have attempted before! We managed to pull blood, check teeth, treat eyes, medicate, deworm, trim hooves, examine udders, get skin scrapings, and deliver calves...all from cattle with horns bigger than most Longhorn cattle I have seen.

Zambia, two countries north of South Africa, became home for a couple weeks as John (my husband) and I met with another veterinarian from El Paso and worked with a group called the United Church of Zambia on their Agricultural Project. This entailed going from farm to farm examining cattle, goats, donkeys, horses, and dogs with medical problems and treating them as best we could with the resources we had. This would be easy if the diseases and the diagnostic tests were the same as we have here in the States, but they were not. Instead, the diseases were foreign to us and our diagnostics consisted of microscope slides and stain, a microscope, a few books I had brought, and our brains. It was exciting to diagnose things I had not seen before like Babesia and Trypanosomiasis, but it was equally as frustrating to not be able to test for diseases that are so easy to test for here in the States.



But it wasn't the cattle, the diseases, or even the calf I pulled that was named after me that made the biggest impression. While our mornings were filled with veterinary work, the afternoons were filled with interacting with the locals and the children and it was there that we got a feel for the culture, the people, and their needs. We went into the villages and prayed with the people, learning about their needs, which in reality are not all that different from ours. Sure, the incidence of AIDS is astronomical (40% in the area we were in) and the people live in huts and make an annual income of about \$1000 per family, if they are fortunate, but they struggle with the same things we do. The adults struggle with loneliness, belonging, sickness, depression, and the reality of death. How awesome it was to offer hope and tell them about Jesus and how He delivers us from all these problems: a best friend for our loneliness, a family of believers to encourage us when we feel we don't belong, a healer who provides the best medicine we can find for our sickness, an encourager who we can talk to whenever we are depressed, and a Father who assures us of heaven upon death if we believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and have a personal relationship with Him. Isn't it awesome that in a place thousands of miles away where cultural contrasts abound, we can share the same God and He can meet our individual needs right where we are!

So the best memories I brought home from Mwindi, Zambia are not veterinary related at all. They are the faces and the stories behind the faces. The faces of elders...aged by the sun and blinded by cataracts. The faces of the children... laughing, playing, and watching as we worked on their animals. The faces of the farmers...inquisitive and concerned for their cattle. The face of the youth pastor, Percy, who translated for us...compassionate and concerned for his people. And on



Palm Sunday as I sat in the packed church with hard wooden pew benches and heard the familiar tune of Amazing Grace in a language I couldn't understand a bit, it occurred to me that like the song, Christ can cross all cultural and language barriers. It didn't matter that I couldn't understand the words, I recognized it as worship and I was so blessed to be able to participate in it, in this beautiful country, with these beautiful people.



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Wow it is hard to believe that I graduated from veterinary school three years ago. It seems like yesterday that I joined the practice and was riding with Heidi and Kendra getting to meet you all and learning the ropes.

Sadly all good things must come to an end. It is with mixed emotions that I am leaving the practice to pursue another adventure across the pond in England. While I feel that this is the right decision at this stage in my life, I am going to miss every one of

you. It has been a delight and an honor to work with you and your horses, goats, and cattle. I thank you for this opportunity because it has shaped me into the Veterinarian I am today.

I wish you all happy and healthy lives. May you enjoy many relaxing trail rides, raise big healthy calves, and enjoy the life God has given you.

Sincerely,  
Melody Davis, DVM

P.S. You're gonna love Christine!

"We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity leads us down new paths."  
~Walt Disney

