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Tail Bleeding

In the Bovine

Jack King*

THE coccygeal vein in the tail can be a convenient place from which to obtain a blood sample. This method is used mostly in dairy cows. Stock cows usually are not as well adapted for the use of this technique unless they are accustomed to being handled and are fairly docile; however, this technique can be used if there are only a few cows and if no chute is available. It is gratifying to hear farmers comment that the cows don't seem to mind at all. Many dairy farmers do not like the use of the nose lead and certainly most cows will resist vigorously.

A 10 cc nylon syringe with a three-quarter inch, 16 gauge needle is used. A luerlok center tip syringe is preferred because it does not break at the base as readily as a slip-on tip syringe may.

Procedure: The tail is held straight over the back of the cow with moderate pressure. The tail can be held by the operator but it is less tiring if an assistant can hold the tail. It is important that the tail is straight as any kinks will distort the relationship of the blood vessels. The best area for entry is usually between the second and fourth coccygeal vertebrae. The ventral midline groove of the vertebrae can be palpated. The needle is inserted into the skin about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch distal to a joint. The needle is then advanced further into the groove at a 45° angle with the tail until bone is touched. The syringe is then eased back and the operator aspirates slowly but steadily. If the cow moves from side to side before you have a chance to aspirate another entry may be necessary.



Withdrawing blood from the tail.

The point of entry is not critical and sometimes more than one entry may be necessary to obtain three to four cc. of blood.

There is a difference between breeds as to the ease of bleeding by this method. The larger breeds are usually easier to bleed because of the greater amount of flesh in which to place the needle. In a poorly fleshed animal it is more difficult to enter the vessel. In such a cow the needle may be entered further proximally to gain the advantage of a fleshier portion of the tail. Tails that have been fractured are more difficult to bleed. Heifers are harder to bleed due to the smaller blood vessels and lack of flesh on the ventral surface of the tail.

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