

Many producers use artificial insemination (A.I.) to breed their cows to bulls that they would not otherwise have access to in order to improve genetics in their herd. Thanks to sex-sorted semen, A.I. can also be used to improve show steer businesses, replacement cow operations, and other programs that are gender specific.

For show calf producers, semen that will produce a bull calf is likely more valuable than heifer producing semen. In contrast, straws of semen that will produce a heifer might be most valuable or desired for use on heifers that will be coming with their first or second calf. Sex-sorted semen is highly beneficial as it aids producers in meeting their operational goals, whether that be increased number of bull calves for show steer production, or decreased calving difficulties in first and second calf heifers.

Though sex-sorted semen is more expensive than conventional semen, it will always be worth it because there is always a premium for good cows that will raise good calves. Using sex-sorted semen from a top sire on a good female will dramatically increase the chances of producing a good calf that is designed to meet the producer's specific goals. Because pregnancy rates from using sex-sorted semen are not typically as high in cows that were inseminated with conventional semen, it is very important to optimize efficacy when using the sexed semen. Fortunately, a recent study was conducted that sought out to do just that.

In two different studies done by the University of Missouri, it was found that using a timed A.I. program, rates were found to dramatically increase in cows and heifers if estrus was observed before insemination. This experiment also studied the differences in pregnancy rates after insemination of conventional or sex-sorted semen and taking into account whether or not estrus was observed. As previously stated, sex-sorted semen pregnancy rates are not as high as those from conventional semen. However, the study shows that by simply observing estrus before insemination, the pregnancy rates from using sexed semen will greatly increase.

Therefore, if you are thinking about using sex-sorted semen, and have a timed A.I. program, use the sex-sorted semen on the cattle that show signs of estrus. Less expensive conventional semen should be used at the time fixed-time A.I. is performed for the cows that fail to exhibit estrus.

For more information concerning the use of artificial insemination in your herd, please contact us.