

# Ask the Vet

by Gail Kocian

## A new TLBAA member asks: What do the letters OCV stand for?

I've seen the letters OCV in sales information on cows and heifers. What do those letters signify?

OCV stands for "Official Calhhood Vaccination". When the letters OCV appear in a sales description it means the cow or heifer was vaccinated for Brucellosis between 4 to 12 months of age.

## What is Brucellosis and is it important that my heifers receive this vaccination?

Brucellosis is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Brucella abortus*. It is also referred to as "Bangs disease". The bacteria targets the reproductive organs, the mammary system and lymph nodes in this region of the body, cows can be prone to abortions during the last trimester of pregnancy, birth of weak calves, retained placentas, difficulty in breeding back and can sometimes become sterile.

So yes, it's very important that you have your heifers OCV'd to help protect them from getting Brucellosis. It is a good idea to have any replacement animals you bring into your herd tested.

Also, many states require that cows and breeding age heifers from other states be OCV'd before crossing their borders, so if you want to sell your heifers and cows to out-of-state buyers, it is necessary to have them vaccinated against this disease. Many sales require that all consigned heifers and cows be OCV'd so as not to restrict the potential market.

## If my cows aren't OCV'd and they become infected, can they be treated?

There is no effective treatment for Brucellosis and infected animals can spread the disease for life. Prevention is only available by having heifer calves *officially* vaccinated by a federally accredited veterinarian.

## What are the signs of cows infected with Brucellosis?

Cattle infected with Brucellosis show no outwardly signs of having the disease. You may observe a late term aborted fetus

and have occurrences of premature calving in your herd. Cows may not be breeding back regularly and some could be giving birth to weak calves.

## How do I know for sure if a cow or heifer has been vaccinated against Brucellosis?

Ordinarily when a heifer has been Bangs vaccinated the licensed veterinarian who administers the Official Calhhood Vaccination will attach an orange metal tag to her right ear and tattoo the inside of that same ear. So visually you can tell whether or not a cow/heifer has been vaccinated *if you see [or don't see] the orange tag in her right ear.*

However, since tags can fall out and be lost, the permanent tattoo in the right ear is sufficient proof that a heifer or cow is OCV'd. If there is a question about her having the Official Calhhood Vaccination the tattoo should be legible enough to be read since the tattoo is fairly large and is positioned between the middle ribs of the ear. Some breeders prefer not to have the tags put in their heifers' ears, but the tattoo is there to show that they have been vaccinated against Brucellosis.

## What information do those orange tags have on them? What does the tattoo show?


The orange metal tag contains a nine-digit alpha-numeric identification number. It has a two-number State code and a series of three letters and four numbers. The underside of the tag has "US" and the letters "VAC". The unique set of numbers and letters on each tag make it possible to track exactly where the tag originated from [name of the veterinarian clinic] and who owned the animal at the time it was OCV'd.

The three-character tattoo shows the type of vaccine that was administered, the vaccine shield and the last number of the year in which the tattoo was placed in the ear. For example in Texas this year the tattoos are RV8....."R" for the vaccine RB51, the "V" stands for the vaccine shield and the "8" signifies the year 2008. Green ink is used for the tattoos since it tends to show up well in even the dark-colored ears.

When a heifer is OCV'd the veterinarian issues a copy of the Brucellosis Vacci-

nation Record to the owner. This document certifies that she was officially vaccinated for Brucellosis and shows the tag number issued, her age, breed, the vaccine type used and the tattoo number.

\*Federal and state regulations have helped to control this disease, but there is still a threat to livestock. Each state has its own requirements for importing cattle from other states so breeders are advised to check with their State Department of Agriculture or their veterinarian for specific rules when planning to transport cattle to or from other states.



**Have a question that you'd like to ask a vet, but always forget when you have the chance? Well, now you have a chance to ask that important question and have your answer shared with other Trails' readers.**

To get your questions submitted, simply type your question and send it to *Trails* Editor Brenda Cantrell at [Brenda@tlbaa.org](mailto:Brenda@tlbaa.org) or fax (817) 625-1388 or mail to: 2315 N. Main Street, Suite 402, Fort Worth, TX 76164. Your questions will be sent to Gail and she will be in hot pursuit to get you the answer.

We are looking forward to hearing from you and getting you the answers you need!