

BACKGROUND

Hormones are naturally occurring chemicals found in varying degrees in all plants and animals, including cattle, and play a role in regulating bodily functions and behaviour. Hormone growth promotants, or implants, are tools used in raising beef cattle to improve the animal's ability to gain muscle and deposit less fat. This allows farmers and ranchers to produce more beef with less feed and less greenhouse gases. The use of hormone implants as growth promotants in Canadian cattle is a closely monitored, regulated and safe practice.

KEY MESSAGES

- Hormones occur naturally by varying degrees in all plants and animals, including cattle.
- The use of hormone implants in beef cattle is safe and regulated. Health Canada, the World Health Organization and the United Nations all conclude the use of **hormones is a safe practice and does not pose a risk to human health¹**.
- Farmers use hormone implants safely and humanely. The implant is a small, slow-release pellet placed under the skin in the ear of the animal where there is no risk of entering the human food chain.
- Using hormone implants directs growth toward muscle and away from fat, which boosts the rate animals grow. This means less feed and fewer resources are required to produce the same amount of beef, resulting in fewer environmental impacts and less cost to the consumer².
- Health Canada requires that animals given hormone implants follow strict withdrawal times before going to market. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency monitors and tests for residue levels in beef and in the rare case where a product does not meet their specifications, it is kept out of the food system³.
- Approximately 80% of beef cattle in Canada are raised conventionally (with the use of growth promotants). Regardless of the way cattle are raised, beef is a safe and important part of a healthy diet.
- **Consumers should know that whether they are buying Canadian beef products raised with hormone implants or ones with a 'raised without the use of hormones' label, that the beef they are eating is equally safe and nutritious.**

BENEFITS OF USING HORMONES IN BEEF CATTLE²

1. Reduced Environmental Impact

- Hormones allow animals to utilize feed and nutrients more efficiently. This means less feed and water is needed and fewer greenhouse gases are emitted.

2. More Accessible for Consumers

- Fewer input costs and reduced time to finish result in lower prices for consumers. Good quality, highly nutritious protein can be made accessible to all Canadians.

3. Leaner Meat

- Cattle raised with hormone implants are more feed efficient, meaning they gain weight as muscle instead of fat, resulting in a leaner meat product.



Many common foods have higher levels of hormones than beef produced with the use of hormone implants. The amount of estrogen in 1 serving of cabbage is equal to the same amount of estrogen from **over 1000 servings** of beef produced using hormone implants⁴.



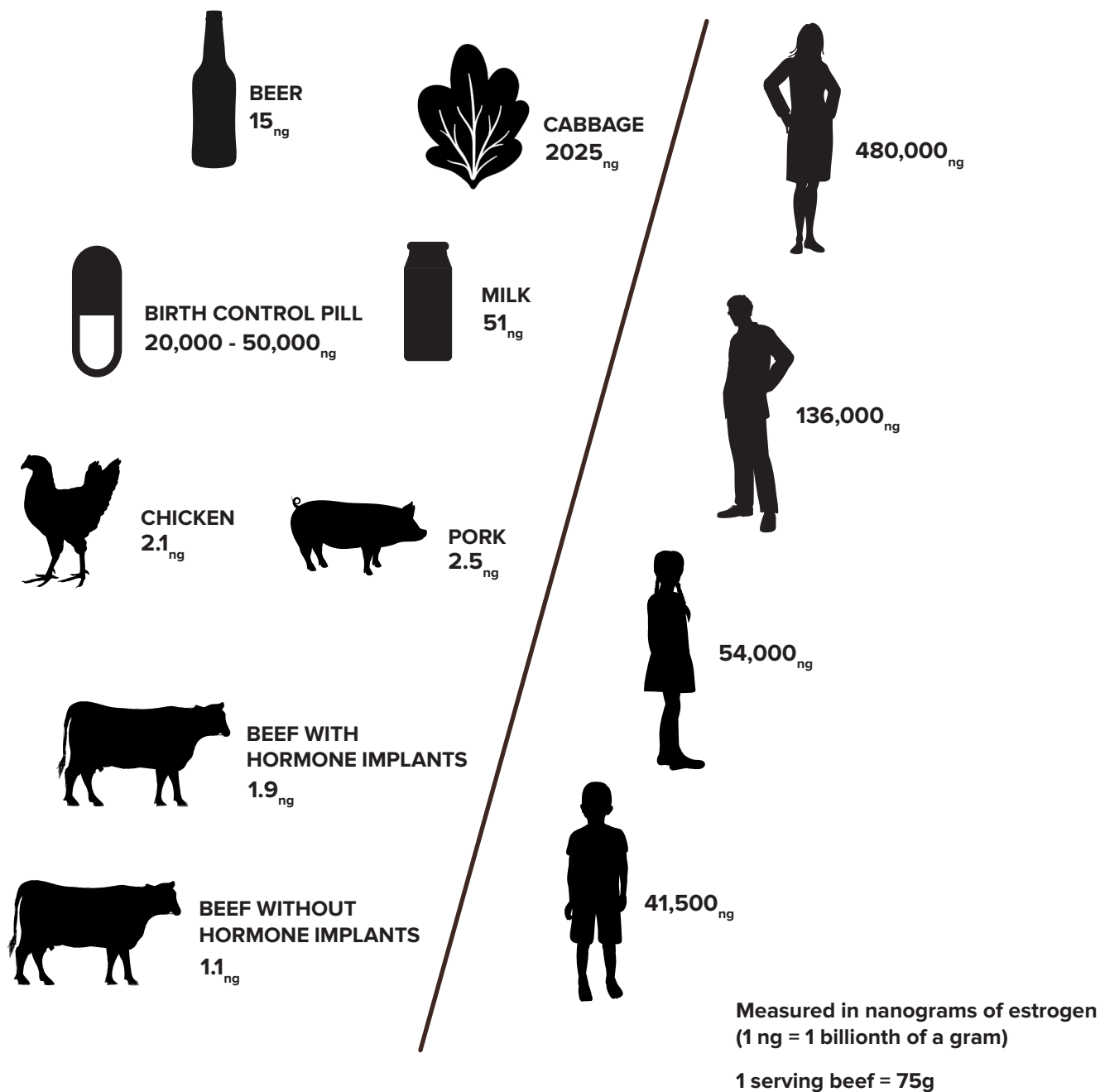
**Canadian
Cattle
Association**



AMOUNT OF ESTROGEN IN FOODS AND SUPPLEMENTS COMPARED TO NATURAL ESTROGEN IN HUMANS⁴

Amount of estrogen
per serving

Amount of estrogen produced
by your body every day



1. Canadian Animal Health Institute. Hormones: <https://www.cahi-icsa.ca/hormones> (Accessed Feb 8, 2024)
2. Capper, J.L. (2012) Is the grass always greener? Comparing the environmental impact of conventional, natural, and grass-fed beef production systems. *Animals* 2(2): 127-143
3. Understanding Beef: Hormones and other growth promotants factsheet (2016). Canada Beef. https://canadabeef.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/3208_CANBEEF_factsheet_HORMONE-2016-P2.pdf (Accessed February 8, 2024)
4. Worried about hormones in cattle? Alberta Beef Producers factsheet. <https://www.albertabeef.org/files/site-content/YaEcVMR7nbGii9T3RTNMMZ5HPfhN7E4YZdRU3ItW.pdf> (Accessed February 8, 2024)