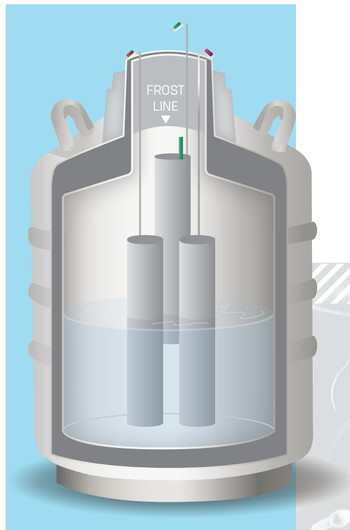
PROGRESSIVE CATTLEMAN

Frozen semen handling tips

John B. Hall, an extension beef cattle specialist with the University of Idaho

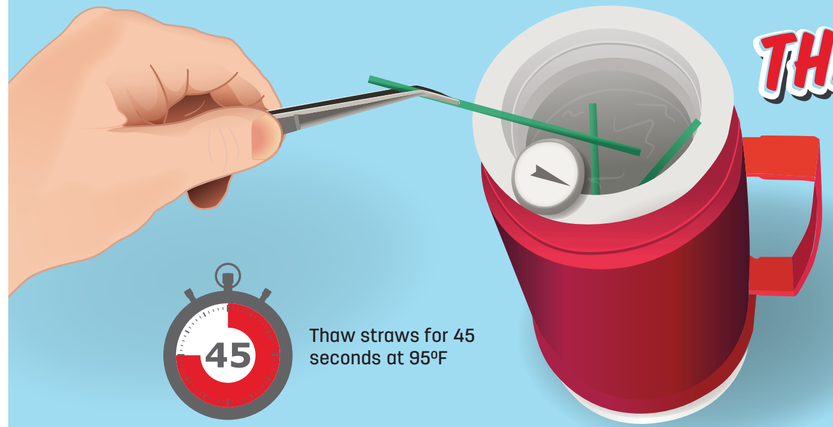
PREPARATION

- Inventory semen in nitrogen tank well before the breeding season begins, and place orders early.
  - If canes need to be examined for inventory, place entire cane fully submerged in a liquid nitrogen bath.
- Label tank with content of each canister or maintain an inventory record.
  - This will reduce time needed to find straws.
- Monitor nitrogen in semen storage tanks, and keep nitrogen at proper levels.



HANDLING

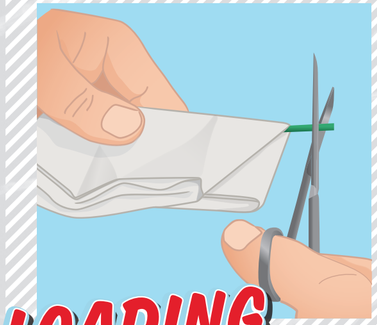
- Always avoid bringing straws or canes above the frost line until straw is to be thawed.
- Make sure semen-handling area has good lighting to see into tank.
- Use forceps when removing straws from cane to keep cane below frost line.



THAWING

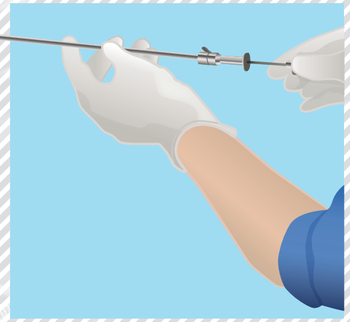
Thaw straws for 45 seconds at 95ºF

- Check the temperature of the electric thaw bath, adjust if necessary, and check your dial thermometer against an alcohol or mercury thermometer.
- Monitor thaw bath temperature continuously.
- Thaw only the number of straws that can be inseminated in 10 to 15 minutes.
  - Strongly consider discarding a straw that was not used in 15 minutes.
- Usually, only five straws should be thawed in a bath at one time to maintain proper thaw bath temperature. Straws should not touch during thawing.



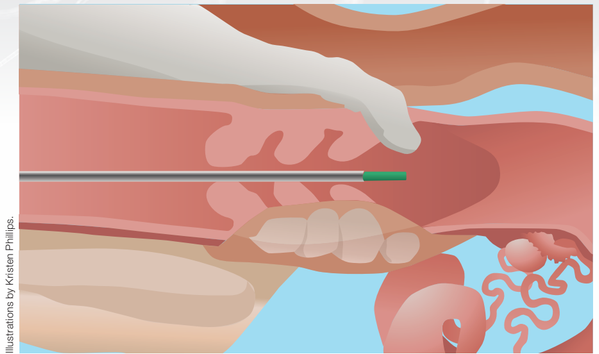
LOADING

- Clip the end of the straw before inserting into sheath. Keep everything clean, dry and warm.



- Load guns properly for type of gun and sheath used. Having a designated person to thaw straws and load guns while others inseminate will help.

- Place loaded gun in shirt or gun warmer to maintain temperature (do not exceed 98ºF) until gun is placed in cow.
  - A commercial A.I. gun warmer is helpful when inseminating multiple animals.



INSEMINATION

- Follow good A.I. techniques, including cleanliness and proper semen placement.

Illustrations by Kristen Phillips.