



MOOSE JAW ANIMAL CLINIC

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Bull Breeding Tips To Consider

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- ◆ To manage reproductive disease, vaccinate herd bulls for IBR and BVD along with the cow herd
- ◆ Try to purchase yearling (virgin) bulls from purebred breeders. This allows for more predictability of the calf crop and minimizes exposure to any reproductive diseases such as trichomoniasis that older bulls may harbor.
 - ◆ Any mature bull with unknown breeding history should be trich tested
- ◆ Every bull should have a breeding soundness evaluation each spring (“BSE”, or in recent years I feel more comfortable calling this a semen check for obvious reasons.....!) This is a relatively small financial investment in comparison to the potential loss that could occur if a subfertile dominant bull is chosen as a herd sire. Semen check looks at scrotal circumference, semen morphology, and semen motility.
- ◆ Semen checking should be done on every bull before each breeding season. Young (new) bulls, older (>5 yrs) bulls and bulls which have had a medical history such as frostbite are especially important to do
- ◆ In some herds, up to 20% of bulls may be sub fertile!
- ◆ When young bulls are tested, other conditions such as hair rings, penile warts, and a persistent frenulum can be detected and dealt with before they become a problem.
 - ◆ A persistent frenulum is a band of tissue from the prepuce to the tip of the penis that causes a marked bending at erection
- ◆ The internal organs are palpated during a BSE and seminal vesiculitis can be detected which is an infection in one of these glands. Generally these bulls are culled as they produce pus in the ejaculate.
- ◆ When selecting horned versus polled bulls, remember that polledness is dominant to horns genetically.
 - ◆ Homozygous polled means that all calves produced will be polled regardless of the dam’s status.
 - ◆ Double polled means both parents are polled, increasing the

likelihood of the offspring being homozygous

- ◆ Scurs are the result of an independent gene and are dominant in bulls yet recessive in heifers, hence we see more scurred bulls
- ◆ When selecting color, black is dominant to red
- ◆ Semen quality and sex drive (libido) are not related. It is extremely important to observe your bulls breeding ability
- ◆ Some bulls spend more time herding and guarding cows rather than breeding them. Does your young bull become cow smart and spread himself around several cows in heat simultaneously?
- ◆ If a young bull tries to mount a cow in heat 3-4 times unsuccessfully, chances are that a problem is inherent
- ◆ Posture of the bull at breeding should be a C-shape versus a straight back
- ◆ Do not run older bulls and yearling bulls together. This is a no-no as injury or social dominance could prevent the yearling from doing any breeding
- ◆ Try to keep a group of bulls together all season. Adding will lead to having to re-establish the pecking order again
- ◆ Watch as horned bulls will usually dominate polled or dehorned bulls
- ◆ Minimal acceptable scrotal circumference for yearlings ranges from 29 cm (Limousin) to up to 33 cm for Simmental. This range is because different breeds have evolved this way with still having acceptable fertility standards
 - ◆ scrotal circumference is related to fertility in the daughters from that bull. For example, a bull with a larger scrotal circumference will generally produce heifers that reach puberty faster than daughters from a smaller circumference bull
- ◆ Research has proven that after 38.5 cm scrotal size, there is no more increase in sperm output
- ◆ Watch the shape of the scrotum when purchasing a new bull. Fat deposits in the neck are not a good thing, as it affects the bull's ability to thermoregulate his testicles. In warm weather, a bull needs to drop the testicles away from the body in order to cool them off and maintain sperm production
- ◆ If you hear the term "testicular degeneration" it refers to a shrinking of the testicles, and hence fertility. It has a variety of causes: increased temperature, infection, trauma, frostbite, and many unknown causes
- ◆ Infections in the herd bull (ie foot rot) that cause a fever often cause an

interruption in sperm production whose effects can be seen for a couple weeks after the bull was sick

- ◆ stress hormones do the same thing, as does injectable anti-inflammatories like dexamethasone

- ◆ NEVER implant a breeding bull

- ◆ Put your bulls on a rising plane of nutrition (like your cows) prior to the breeding season

- ◆ Exercise is important to get your sires in breeding conditions

- ◆ Tending to the bull's feet at least a few weeks before breeding season is very important. Keeping the feet in healthy condition can extend the breeding life of a bull and prevent abscesses, cracks, and corns from possibly developing.

- ◆ Consider using a commercial foot rot vaccine on your herd sires each year. A bull down with a foot problem in the middle of breeding season spells disaster.

- ◆ Select bulls on E.P.D's (Expected Progeny Differential) These are good indications of the bull's ability to sire calves with a projected outcome of birthweight, weaning weight, etc

- ◆ All of the above factors have a huge impact on your bull/cow ratio. Varying from 1/15 for yearlings and up to 1/50 for mature, sound, good moving, fertile bulls

Follow these guidelines and have a productive breeding season!!!