

NEWS COLUMN

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May 15, 2009

Get Cattle Ready for Breeding Season

Beef producers need consider several things as they turn their cows out to pasture for the upcoming breeding season.

Breeding soundness exams should be considered for all herd bulls. Most exams cost \$30-\$40. An exam includes both a physical and semen evaluation.

Producers must be careful when ignoring (soundness exams) because a bad bull can really be costly in terms of open cows and prolonging the calving season.

Other important issues to look at are nutrition and parasite control.

Both cows and bulls need to be on a positive nutritional plane going into breeding season. A high-phosphorous mineral supplement (greater than 8%) prior to and during the breeding season is also recommended.

Prior to turning cattle out is a good time to assess parasite control programs. Control practices vary with region, environment and management practices.

The growing popularity of leasing bulls in recent years brings up some reproductive disease problems. As a producer, be aware of the risk. Be careful of diseases that can be spread from herd to herd by a leased bull, particularly trichomoniasis.

Bulls will show no signs of the disease, but may carry it for long periods.

Trichomoniasis is found more commonly in mature bulls, greater than four years.

Also make sure your herd is protected against other reproductive diseases, especially vibriosis, leptospirosis and BVD.

Vibriosis is an infectious disease that causes infertility and occasional abortions. It is spread by breeding and considered by some to be the most important cause of infertility in cattle.

Leptospirosis will also trigger abortions and is spread by breeding.

BVD can cause abortion, weak calves at birth, calves with brain damage or other abnormalities of fetal development.

Cattle should be vaccinated for reproduction diseases two to three weeks prior to the start of the breeding season.

Consult with your local veterinarian for more details on options for your heard health program.