



Spring Beef Newsletter

As the sun gets stronger, and the grass begins to green up, it is important that we have an organized plan to turnout for the upcoming pasture season. Now is the time to think about a few of the following things.

Cows

- Vaccination of the cows and replacements with Bovishield Gold FP5/L5 HB (if on a spring vaccine program) in multiples of 5 or 10 once >3wks fresh.
- Apply fly tags, 1/ear

Calves

- Dehorn any calves (not done with paste) with hot iron after frozen
 - Give 1cc metacam/100lbs under the skin for pain
- Castrate any bull calves not banded
 - Give 1cc metacam/100lbs under the skin for pain
- Implant calves with Ralgro to improve gain on pasture
 - Do not implant replacement heifers or bulls for sale
- Apply fly tags, 1/ear
- Vaccinate for *blackleg* and other clostridial diseases
 - Talk to the clinic to determine what vaccine is right for your herd

Bulls

- Perform breeding soundness evaluation 4-6 weeks prior to breeding
- Vaccinate with Bovishield Gold FP5/L5 HB
 - Talk to the clinic if bull purchased from the west
- Vaccinate with Fusoguard (for pasture footrot)
- Apply fly tags, 1/ear

Deworm herd with *SAFEGUARD* 4-6 weeks after turnout.

We came across this article by Glenn Selk from Oklahoma State. He has a few simple management procedures (other than a breeding soundness exam) that you can do involving the bulls to increase the likelihood of a high pregnancy percentage among the cows.

Any producer that purchases a young, highly fitted or conditioned bull should plan to gradually reduce the fleshiness of the bull before the breeding season. To let these bulls down, it is a good practice to start them on a ration that is not too dissimilar to the one to which they have been accustomed, but that the concentrate portion is 60 to 70 percent of their previous intake. The amount of grain can be reduced at the rate of about 10 percent per week until the desired level is achieved. At the same time, substitutions should be made in the form of quality forages--such as high quality grass hay or alfalfa hay. Ideally, this letdown should be completed prior to the time bulls are turned out. Dramatic nutritional changes can have an adverse effect on semen production, so it is important that these ration modifications be done gradually. Producers need to try to keep the total diet of these young bulls at, or near, 12% crude protein. Therefore the forage needs to be excellent quality. Allow the change of diets to take place gradually, instead of allowing a rapid condition and weight loss during the first of the breeding season, which could be reflected in a reduced calf crop next year.

Other bull management strategies include the following:

1. In multi-sire pastures, make certain that the bulls that will be pastured together have been in a common trap or pasture prior to the breeding season. Bulls WILL establish a social hierarchy. It is better to get this done before the breeding season begins rather than wait until they are first placed with the cows.
2. Put young bulls with young bulls and mature bulls with mature bulls. Mixing the ages will result in the mature bull dominating the younger bull completely, and in some instances causing a serious injury. If the plan is to rotate bulls during the breeding season, then use the mature bulls first, and follow with the yearling bulls in the last third of the breeding season. In this way, the young bulls will have fewer cows to settle, and will be 1 - 2 months older when they start breeding.
3. Check the feet and have hoof trimming completed at least 30 days prior to the start of the breeding season to avoid lame or sore-footed bulls at the important beginning of the breeding season.

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Extension

Additional Comments:

It has been brought to our attention that there needs to be some clarification on putting bulls out to pasture. A mature bull is 3+ years of age and young bulls are 1-2.5 years of age.

The part of the article that speaks of multi-sire (3 or more bulls) pastures will refer to very large pastures (100 + acres). There are a lot of producers out there that don't have pastures that large and others that split them.

If you are running your cow herd on smaller pastures 25-35 cows/pasture then rotating a different bull in every 2 weeks is a great idea. It has been shown to increase libido in both the cows and bull. If you run 50-60 cows/pasture and are running 2 bulls, make sure one bull is young and the other is mature. Again rotating the bull pairs is a great idea.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the clinic.