

BeefTalk: Wind and Cold Are a Dangerous Combination For Bulls

Bulls exposed to wind and cold could be neutered by morning.

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Very cold wind, three four-letter words, took a bite out of much of the northern Plains recently. Wind chills at minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit sent sharp pains of cold, almost like daggers, against my face.

I could not help wondering about the cows. I never have seen a frozen cow that wasn't dead. Healthy, living cows do not freeze. Cow stand on four legs that are totally exposed to the weather, but get along just fine. Cows will attempt to get out of the wind and lay down.

However, those cows don't freeze. They will stand on ice and snow while enduring temperatures well below what most people could survive, but life goes on.

Come morning, the cow will get up, get a good drink of water, find hay, eat and spend the rest of the day pondering and ruminating. The same is not true for calves because they have a lower freezing index.

Make sure your bulls are not left out in the cold. Bulls face the same challenges. Bulls have a scrotum that is designed to allow heat out of the body and away from the testicles. The bull will not tolerate these temperatures without respectable bedding and wind protection.

Bulls exposed to wind and cold could be neutered by morning. More than likely, there will be enough testicular tissue left to make good teaser bulls. However, since the sperm must exist at the bottom of the testis, any frozen testicles are pretty much irreplaceable.

Generally, the testis does not freeze and the damage usually is limited to the scrotum. Check all bulls for scrotal swelling, which would be followed by the sloughing of dead skin. In such cases, the heat of the inflamed scrotum actually damages the sperm producing and storage capacity of the bull's reproductive system, which generally renders the bull infertile for a couple of months.

All bulls should have an annual breeding soundness exam. If breeding soundness exams have not been a practice within your operation, it certainly should be this year. Do the test in late March or early April. There still will be plenty of bull sales for replacement shopping.

Bull nutrition also is important. Bulls can gain 300 pounds a year. Stunting their growth and expecting the production of several billion sperm cells in the spring is unrealistic.

Dry-matter intake tables (Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle, Seventh Revised Edition) indicates a 2,000-pound bull should eat 32 pounds per day. As the bull adds weight, daily dry-matter intake could be up to 38 pounds.

Add it up and make sure your bulls are getting the right amount of a balanced ration for proper maintenance and growth. Check with your nutritionist.

Images



Is Your Bull's
Scrotum
Frozen? You
Better Check!

In addition, keep an eye out for those bulls that have developed structural problems. Bulls can walk out of the fall breeding pasture, but a few good hits while getting reacquainted with the other bulls, plus a winter of very cold temperatures, can lead to structural difficulties that will prevent the bull from being an effective breeder. Watch the market and, when the time is right, send those bulls to town. Do your neighbor a favor and note that the bull is for slaughter only.

Well, this discussion started with cows and will end with cows. The cow survives and doesn't freeze, thanks to her ability to produce heat from the feed she eats. Interestingly, the modern world is striving for efficiency, but the cow depends on the inefficiency of metabolizing the feed she eats to keep her warm on these cold winter nights.

Keep her full and provide wind protection and she will survive quite well. And, we hope, she will meet a fertile bull following calving.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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Attachments



PDF - Is Your Bull's Scrotum Frozen? You Better Check!
(bt013108.pdf - 23.30 Kb)



EPS - Is Your Bull's Scrotum Frozen?
You Better Check!
(bt013108.eps - 136.80 Kb)