

BeefTalk 499: Slowly Adapt New Bulls to Their New Home

The best way to treat new bulls is to place them in an environment similar to the one they came from.

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After a spring of bull shopping, the first thing one realizes is there are a lot of good bulls on the market from many good breeds.

The strong selection makes for fun shopping, reviewing the highlighter markings of the good traits of each bull in the catalog, bidding vigorously and eventually owning the bull of your choice.

The second obvious point has to do with soundness. Sound bulls are structurally correct and blend with their environment. In fact, bulls are products of their environment.

The best way to treat new bulls is to place them in an environment similar to the one they came from. While a smooth transition is important, this is not always possible.

Some of the genetics a producer buys may be coming from another state or region. While challenging, the transition is very important because overlooking the adjustment period in settling a new bull can be devastating.

The end result shows when new bulls are brought home only to not meet expectations. Perhaps, producers need to think about personal, life-changing events that did not always sit well.

Where should one start? The first obvious life change was birth, but none of us really remember that (excuse me moms), so maybe we should think about our first day away from home.

Our lives not only changed, but our bodies needed to adapt to new surroundings, food and companions. For some, the transition may have been uneventful, while for others, it was darn miserable.

If that does not ring a bell, think about broken relationships, friendships, estrangement or death. We need to get a handle on how these events impact our lives and bodies as well. We can personally relate to friends or acquaintances that have experienced change and struggled with the impact.

So, welcome to the world of bull buying! After spending hours selecting, bidding and finally acquiring a new bull or bulls, the time to get the bull home is here.

There is a huge difference between how humans and bulls perceive things, but the effects of change still are present, even if it's just a bull. To start with, feed changes, if any, should be gradual.

Ask what type of ration the bull was on prior to being delivered because keeping similar feed in front of the new arrival is good. Don't wait.

Bulls are ruminants. As producers, we are feeding the bull and the many living organisms in the rumen. The rumen organisms do not like to be messed with.

If a significant portion of the rumen microbes die, the bull doesn't do well, either. So start simple by mimicking the previous feed rations if at all possible.

If the bull was on a ration high in grain, the microbes in the rumen will be adapted to it. If the bull was developed on forage, then the microbes of the rumen are more geared to digesting forage. Feed accordingly!

Take two to four weeks to slowly adjust the bull to your localized diet. If you don't, well, your new bull purchase may have four feet up the next day.

Generally, that does not happen. What does happen is the bull's body takes longer than needed to adjust. If the adjustment gets rough, the bull's fertility decreases.

Infertile bulls produce open cows. Open cows frustrate producers.

Frustrated producers make life difficult for bull breeders. Producers will say the bull wasn't any good in the first place.

Wrong. Most bulls are fertility tested. Those that aren't fertile aren't sold.

The next conclusion is that the newly purchased bull was transitioned poorly which ultimately triggered a fertility setback. Take time to adapt bulls to their new surroundings and pay attention to their nutrition. In return, the bulls will settle your cows.

May you find all your ear tags.

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

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