

Clean Out the Cull Bulls and Save Feed Inventory

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The blessings of a nice fall are always appreciated. One of the hidden side effects of nice weather is that cattle remain on limited nutrition while out on pasture. Management changes are generally triggered by a change in weather, usually snow. Until Mother Nature pulls the trigger, cattle often remain on dormant grass.

Since there is no grass actively growing, feed resources are quickly utilized. Bulls are one of the most neglected groups. Bulls are generally pulled from the cows and placed in an out-of-the-way place for the remainder of the season. Bulls are often the last group of cattle brought in to winter feeding areas because a lot of attention is placed on the freshly weaned calves, calves in backgrounding lots or sorting cows.

On one of those less-than-busy days, go and review the bull herd. Check the records. This is the time to market problem bulls, inferior bulls or old bulls.

Currently, the Dickinson Research Extension Center has 19 Hereford bulls. We will only need 17 bulls next spring, so it doesn't make sense to maintain bulls we won't need.

To start with, we look at the obvious. Bull N861 has penis warts, a not uncommon problem for bulls and sometimes treatable, but in this case, the bull needs to go. Although none of the other bulls have obvious male reproductive problems, now is a good time to check the bulls for other abnormalities or injuries that may have occurred during the breeding season.

Bulls with structural problems should go to town. At the DREC, September and October have been restful months for the bulls. With adequate nutrition, the coming 3-year-old bulls weigh an average of 1,895 pounds and the coming 2-year-old bulls average 1,376 pounds.

Since a good selection of young yearlings will be available next year, bulls that have not recovered as well should be sold. Two bulls, M362 and M465, weighed in at 1,720 and 1,770 pounds respectively. Both bulls simply are not

up to par and need to go to town.

In the 2-year-old division, N174 and N194, weighing 1,340 and 1,330 pounds respectively, need to be sold. With those bulls culled for obvious reasons, the performance book is brought out and a review of each individual bull's expected progeny difference (EPD) values is completed.

As with any management decision, one has to weigh the present genetic value of the sound bulls versus what the anticipated price will be for replacement bulls next spring, as well as their genetic value. Can one actually buy better genetics? For the center, the threshold for performance is first applied to weaning weight and yearling weight EPD values. The bulls must have an EPD value of 40 for weaning weight and 70 for yearling weight. The preferred EPD values are 50 for weaning weight and 80 for yearling weight.

All the bulls make that cut, so a minimum value of 12 for maternal milk is applied and N762 hits the road. Bull N737 failed the maternal milk test, but he has tremendous growth, making him a terminal bull only, at least at this point. In reviewing the carcass trait EPD value, bull M470 was marginal on milk (11), weaning weight (47) and yearling weight (75). M470 also has a negative 0.15 rib eye area. The bottom line: The center can buy a better bull next spring.

How are your bulls doing? Got some to sell? May you find all your USAIP ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0222.

Dickinson Research Extension Center's Fall Cull Bull List

Bull number	Reason Culled
M362	175 pounds below average weight for coming 3-year-olds
M465	125 pounds below average weight for coming 3-year-olds
N174	36 pounds below average weight for coming 2-year-olds
N194	46 pounds below average weight for coming 2-year-olds
N861	Reproductive tract problems, penis warts
N762	Below minimum value 12 for maternal milk EPD
M470	Marginal on milk, weaning weight and yearling weight EPD values, 11, 47 and 75, respectively plus a negative 0.15 rib eye area EPD