

NEWS

North Dakota State University -- **NDSU Agriculture
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NDSU Extension Service

BeefTalk: Keeping Bulls Out of Sight and Out of Mind Can Lead to Disaster

By Kris Ringwall, Extension Beef Specialist,

I help Gary White, chair of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Studies at Dickinson State University, teach a course on "Problems in Beef Cattle Management." Each student is assigned a North Dakota cow/calf mentor operation that is presently using the CHAPS (Cow Herd Appraisal of Performance Software) analytical process.

The combination--classroom and mentor herd--helps develop a complete and realistic picture of the beef industry. In addition, new ideas from the students are encouraged as they evaluate the BeefTalk columns--and also write one. I would like to share with you thoughts from Cody Chytka, from Belle Fourche, S.D., on bull care:

"After the breeding season, many producers would like to forget about their breeding bulls, and some do. They become a hassle, as no one really wants them in the way. How much easier it is to push them to the back forty and worry about them next spring. Although it is apparent that breeding bulls do not require a lot of extra attention in the off-season, some care must be fulfilled in order to reduce costs for the next year.

"Most breeding commences in the spring or early summer, and extends for two to three more months. Even with a 60-day pre-breeding conditioning period this still leaves approximately seven months of post breeding. These are usually the fall and winter months. After the completion of the breeding season, old or crippled bulls should be sorted off and sold. Mature healthy bulls won't require a lot of extra care, so they could go by themselves.

"This leaves the younger, thinner bulls to work with. These are the ones that should receive a little higher quality feed through the winter to increase years of productivity. Proper balanced nutrition, including minerals, should be available to assure optimum reproductive performance.

"Nutrition begins with adequate amounts of feed. For example, a 1300 pound bull needing to gain 1.5 pounds per day needs 26.1 pounds of dry matter, of which 2 pounds (7.9 percent) needs to be protein and 15.6 pounds (59.7 percent) needs to be TDN or energy. A larger bull, say 1900 pounds, needing to gain 0.5 pounds per day needs 32.2 pounds of dry matter, of which 2.2 pounds (6.9 percent) needs to be protein and 16.8 pounds (52 percent) needs to be TDN or energy.

"Shelter is also an overlooked aspect. Testicles can be easily frozen in this part of the Midwest, so some bedding and shelter are important.

Remember, bulls constitute 50 percent of next year's calf crop. Wise management practices can reduce variable costs, resulting in greater overall revenue."

Wow! The Center currently has 31 bulls on inventory, and sure enough, one of them turned up sick. Without early diagnosis and adequate treatment, the value of the bull would soon be zero. I also noticed the bulls were in the yard one day. Why? The bulls had removed 300 yards of new fence from the pasture they were in, in an attempt to reach the weaned heifer calves.

Cody could not be any more right when he indicates producers would like to forget about the bull inventory. They can truly be a pain. What impressed me the most about the students BeefTalk articles was the willingness to be proactive rather than reactive.

Bull care and nutrition needs to start now, not next spring prior to bull turnout. Bulls need to be physically healthy, athletic in nature and conditioned for a vigorous marathon. Bulls that are mismanaged, and the spermatogenic cycle disrupted, would need a minimum of two months to start having a viable sperm supply for proper conception of the following year's calf crop.

Listen to Cody, don't forget about those bulls. Keep them in sight and properly fed. Where are your bulls?

May you find all your 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 BT0069.

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Daily Nutrient Requirements for Regaining Body Condition of Bulls				
Bull Weight	Average Daily Gain	Total Dry Matter Intake	Protein	TDN Intake
(lbs)	(lbs)	(lbs)	(lbs)	(lbs)
1300	1.5	26.1	2.0	15.6
1500	1.0	28.3	2.1	15.8
1700	0.5	29.6	2.1	15.4
1900	0.5	32.2	2.2	16.8

Cow-Calf Management Guide, Second Edition, CL 300
College of Agriculture, University of Idaho

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