

It is well known that in order to produce at their best, cattle must be in optimum health. That is, cattle that are not healthy and not receiving adequate nutrition will not perform well compared to cattle that are healthy and meeting their nutritional requirements. This can affect every part of a cow or bull's body- especially their reproductive system. This week we will introduce some areas of health and nutrition that can result in decreased fertility in a bull if not addressed before it is too late.

Nutrition plays a key role in bulls, as too much or too little can negatively affect his fertility. It is therefore imperative that you know what the bull's nutritional requirements are, and that they are met. Reproduction requirements are higher than maintenance requirements, as more is expected of a bull that will be breeding cows. It is also important to note that younger bulls have higher requirements than older bulls, as they are still growing and maturing. Though the bulls should be provided with adequate amounts of nutrition, a producer should not go overboard when feeding his bull(s). Infertility in over conditioned bulls can occur just as often as infertility due to inadequate nutrition. Over conditioned bulls will likely experience reduced libido, and less semen production due to excessive fat deposits around his reproductive organs. Because of this, a producer should aim to produce a bull that is neither under, nor over conditioned, but that is just right and is receiving enough nutrition to meet his requirements.

In addition to meeting his nutritional requirements for reproduction in terms of crude protein, energy, etc., a producer should take special care to ensure the bull has access to vitamins and minerals so that he does not become deficient. To accomplish this, we recommend that the bull receive free choice minerals year round, in conjunction with a MultiMin injection. Supplying the bull with proper amounts of vitamins and minerals will not only help keep him healthy, but will help him to be fertile as well. It is also wise to implement a proven parasite extermination program that will prevent the infestation of internal and external parasites such as lice, flies, and worms. These parasites should be controlled, as they can quickly cause a weakened immune system in the bull, which in turn may affect his fertility.

Bulls should also be vaccinated with a respiratory vaccine with Vibrio and Lepto prior to the breeding season. This will help prevent the bull from contracting a respiratory illness, which may compromise his fertility. Further, a blackleg vaccine may also be given at this time. Most producers find it easiest and most time efficient to vaccinate the bull with a respiratory, blackleg, wormer, and MultiMin at the same time the fertility test is performed (typically at least 60 days prior to the start of breeding season).

As with humans, cattle perform best when they are healthy, and are meeting their nutritional requirements. Take some time and calculate the nutrient consumption of your bull, and make adjustments if he is not meeting his production requirements. Please contact us if you need help with this, or would like to formulate a vaccination program for your bull. Next week we will continue our discussion of things that affect fertility, and talk about reproductive organs, and semen quality.

Please note that one of our clients has an opening for a ranch manager position. If you or anyone you know may be interested, please call or come by the clinic for more information.

Prices for feeder steers medium and large 1 sold through the Oklahoma National Stockyards on Monday, February 16, 2015, are as follows: 472lb- \$298.21, 557lb- \$269.16, 673lb- \$226.26, and 779lb- \$207.35. The price for March 2015 750lb feeder steers on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange was \$204.7 on closing Monday, February 16, 2015.

Thanks,

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