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BULL BREEDING SOUNDNESS EXAMINATIONS – WHY DO IT?

WHAT IS A VETERINARY BULL BREEDING SOUNDNESS EXAMINATION (VBBSE)?

The VBBSE is a relatively quick, humane and economic procedure for fertility screening bulls prior to sale or joining. The scheme is set out by the Australian Cattle Veterinarians and aims to determine if the bull in question is above a target baseline which would regard him as having a high probability of being fertile. It involves both an internal and external examination with the main components including checking physical conformation of the head, feet, legs, sheath and then assessing scrotal circumference, physical examination of reproductive organs and a semen examination including both motility and morphology. At the end of the assessment you will receive a certificate that the bull has or has not passed the examination.



BENEFITS OF BULL TESTING?

A VBBSE gives an indication of potential breeding value which can assist both breeders and buyers. It allows you to identify bulls which have passed the required examination and most importantly, those that are unsatisfactory. Regardless of perceived genetic merit, if a bull is not sound both functionally and reproductively, it will not contribute to your herd's productivity. Testing a bull prior to joining will minimise the risk of mating a sub fertile or infertile bull to a herd which results in more efficient production and improved pregnancy rates.

WHEN SHOULD I GET MY BULLS TESTED?

Bulls should be evaluated by your veterinarian prior to the joining period. They may also be tested before a sale, for insurance purposes or when an infertility problem is suspected.

WHAT IS MORPHOLOGY & SHOULD I DO IT?

During a VBBSE, semen is examined under a microscope crush side by your veterinarian to determine if semen motility is within normal range for fertile bulls. If semen is suitable, a sample can then be sent for further laboratory evaluation to view the semen morphology. Morphology looks at the 'structure' of individual sperm cells using a high powered microscope. It has the ability to identify bent tails, deformed heads and other structural problems. The structural attributes are extremely important for determining fertility – he may have lots of sperm but if they are all swimming in circles then he isn't going to get many cows pregnant!

ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD DO AT THE SAME TIME?

All bulls should ideally be completely up to date with 7in1 or 5in1 vaccinations. As well as this, it is highly recommended to vaccinate against Bovine Venereal Campylobacteriosis (Vibrio) which can cause infertility and abortion. Initially bulls are given two vaccinations 4-6wks apart and then a booster annually prior to joining, ideally at bull testing. Dependant on your production system, other vaccinations such as Pestigard and Ultravac Botulinum or Longrange may also be carried out.

SO WHY BULL TEST?

The VBBSE of bulls is a well-tested, cost effective veterinary procedure which places bulls into categories that reflect their breeding potential. By selecting a bull that has performed well on a VBBSE, there are reduced risks of reproductive failures. Not only is this hugely beneficial for your herd but if you are selling bulls, a positive VBBSE broadens your prospective client base. VBBSE ensures better bulls enhancing your fertility rates and production and when selected for, direct genetic effects on both male and female traits.



Contact us to book in your bull testing this season!

This information sheet is not intended as a substitute for a veterinary consultation.

It is recommended that a consultation be arranged with a veterinary practitioner if you have any concerns with your herd's health.