

MOT your stock bull

Maximise bull potential – plan ahead to minimise poor fertility in your stock bulls



Better Returns Programme

Always beware when handling bulls – all bulls are dangerous. Always use sound, appropriate handling facilities.



Good health

Ensure all routine vaccinations and treatments are up to date, including;

- vaccinations eg for BVD and Leptospirosis
- treatments for liver fluke and external parasites (eg flies, lice)
- anthelmintics to eliminate gutworms and lungworms



Sound feet

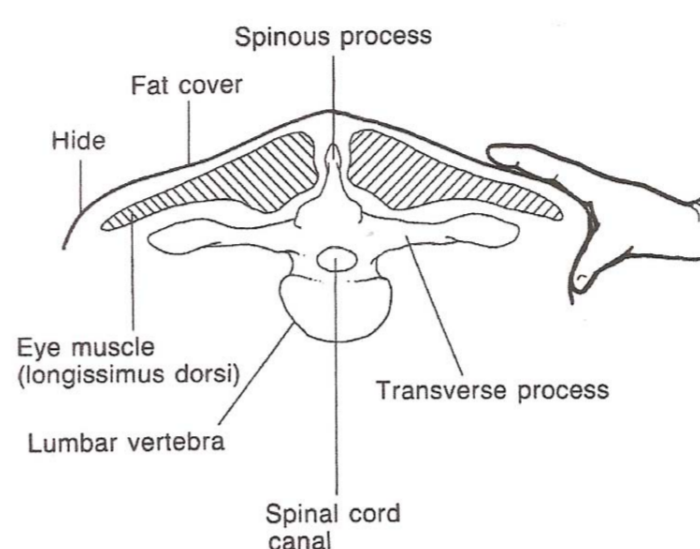
Assess the bull's stance and gait when standing and walking.

Good locomotion is vital to get cows in calf. Lameness can impair movement, increase body temperature and reduce semen production. Investigate any abnormal movement, overgrown claws or lameness. Ensure any foot trimming is complete at least 2 months before the breeding season begins.

Correct body condition

Body condition score bulls 6–8 weeks before the breeding season starts. Investigate reasons for any loss of condition, examine teeth, nutrition, overall health, etc.

Bulls should be on a rising plane of nutrition as the breeding season begins. Too much, or too little, body condition can mean reduced semen quality and libido. Bulls should be fit not fat.



Nutrition for fertility

Avoid feeding high levels of concentrate for prolonged periods. This can lead to movement problems, reduced semen quality and diminished libido. Supplement good quality forage with 2–3 kg of high fibre, 14% CP concentrate, depending on body condition. Remember to include a mineral supplement in the diet.



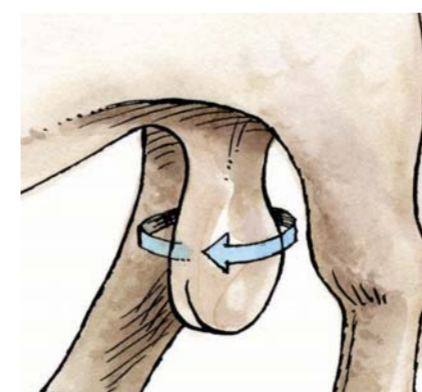
Semen production takes 60 days so the bull must be in good health and ready for work at least 10 weeks before the breeding season begins.

Breeding soundness examination

Recommended within one month of intended use (or sale). As well as a health status check, veterinary breeding soundness examinations would also look at:

Testicles

Look for an even pair of testicles without puffiness or abnormalities, firm and springy (like a new tennis ball) moving freely within the scrotal sac. Scrotal circumference relates positively to sperm output. A circumference of at least 34cm is recommended for bulls over 24 months old.



Penis

A vet can check the sheath, the penis and the internal reproductive organs.

Semen

Semen can be collected and evaluated to assess sperm quality.

Assessing mating ability and libido

Observe bulls serving cows and look for problems, eg corkscrew penis.

Hired bulls or bulls that have worked in other herds

Avoid importing problems. All bulls can spread disease in your herd. Hired bulls, or bulls that have worked elsewhere, carry an increased risk of introducing diseases including Campylobacter. Ask about their health status before using them, have them blood-tested for BVD and Johne's disease and ask your vet to sheath wash them.

This poster provides a checklist to help farmers get the best from their stock bulls – service is only successful when a pregnancy has been established so it is worth watching cow and bull activity closely during the service period and pregnancy testing females soon afterwards.