

Observe Bulls During the Breeding Season

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The success of every beef cattle operation depends on the bull being used. It is critical that the bull be observed during the breeding season to see that he is settling all the cows.

The first step is to have a Breeding Soundness Evaluation completed prior to the start of the breeding season. This will insure that the bull is fertile and that he is physically fit. The one thing that the Breeding Soundness Examination does not do is determine his level of desire. This is one of the reasons why observation during the breeding season is so important.

Turning a bull out with the cows without frequent checks can result in cows not getting settled. Record matings so cows not settling can be identified. If too many are not getting settled, then there may be a problem with the bull.

The observation of the bull has two parts. First observe if he has the desire to mate with the cows. Secondly the observations should determine if there are physical reasons why he is not mating with cows. If there is no desire to mate, then he needs to be replaced immediately.

Always check to see that he does not have physical problems that would reduce or eliminate the possibility of him settling a cow. Problems could include bad eyes, injured or broken legs, or other similar problems. Reproductive tract injuries can quickly stop a bull's desire to mate.

Remember a bull that is over worked may have lowered desire. Always match the bull with the appropriate number of cows for the terrain that must be covered.

In summary, it is critical that the bull be observed during the breeding season. Identifying problems and correcting them can salvage a calf crop. Contact your local Extension agent for additional information.