

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Bull Management in the Fall”*

No matter the sport or age of an athlete, it is often recommended that at the end of the season, the body should be given time to rest. That body management strategy can apply to bulls after they've completed the breeding season. Let's talk about bull longevity in the herd.

In single-sire herds in which replacement heifers are retained, the bull will need to be replaced more frequently than those with multiple sire herds, to avoid breeding sires to their daughters. In a larger herd where the mating can be controlled, bulls may be able to stay in the herd 4-6 years or even longer.

Regardless of a bull's age, breeding soundness exams need to be done annually near the start of the breeding season. As bulls get past middle age, their fertility starts to decrease. They also start to have more musculoskeletal issues because of their size, and that can lead to foot and leg problems. Fall is a good time to evaluate these problems and their severity.

Fall is a good time to do some routine hoof trimming, not only from the slowed hoof growth, but also if they experience an injury in the process, there is time for them to heal. While it isn't common, if there is a severe injury that happens when the bull is put on the trimming table, there would still be time to replace him ahead of the breeding season.

Let's consider nutrition. Yearling and two-year old bulls are still growing, so they will need a higher quality diet than mature bulls outside of the breeding season. They probably don't need supplements unless they lost a lot of weight during the breeding season and they need to regain body condition. Producers should offer good quality hay to the younger bulls. Once he reaches maturity, his nutritional needs are less so the quality of hay can also be decreased.

A mature bull has the lowest nutritional requirements of any animal in the herd, so he can be fed the lowest quality hay in order to match maintenance needs. Because of the different nutritional needs of cattle in herds, it is advised to separate bulls from the cows when not in the breeding season. By leaving bulls with cows outside of the breeding season, nutritionally speaking, there is a risk that the bulls will get over-conditioned from eating the supplements that the cows need.

Information comes from Kansas State University Cattle Institute experts, Bob Larson, Phillip Lancaster, and Brian Lubbers.

If you are looking for KSRE programs to attend: Small Ruminant Success: Management to Market on Thursday December 12<sup>th</sup> starting at 5:45 pm in Eureka. Free to attend. Meal provided. Please contact the office for more information and to register.