

BULL FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT

The management of the breeding bull can be broken down into the following three phases.

- **Before the Breeding Season**

Ideally a producer will have determined his bull needs 90 days prior to the start of the breeding season. These individuals should be subjected to a breeding soundness exam. A breeding soundness exam will help to assure the reproductive capacity and physical soundness of each bull. Bulls which will be in the cow herd together should be grouped together to become familiar with each other and to develop a social structure. This will help to prevent fighting when turned in with the cow herd.

Proper attention and care of the feet is important in prolonging the useful life of the bull. After extended periods of inactivity, the hooves may be long and misshapen. Hoof trimming should be done at the start of the conditioning period to allow for regrowth which serves as a cushion during the breeding season.

The nutrition prior to the breeding season is important as bulls will tend to lose weight during the season. It is important that an adequate energy reserve be built.

- **Yearling Bulls -**

These animals have not yet reached their mature weight. They should be making adequate growth and maintaining a satisfactory body condition without becoming excessively fat. This will require between 25 and 30 pounds dry matter of a 80% high quality forage and 20% concentrate ration. Because of the rapid growth which is also occurring, a 12% to 14% protein ration is required. In many cases, producers prefer a complete feed that will put their bulls in good rigor without over conditioning them.

- **2 year old Bulls -**

These bulls will already be at most of their mature size, so their ration is not quite as crucial. Approximately 30 to 35 pounds of a ration consisting of high quality forage and 5 pounds of grain will meet their needs.

- **Mature Bulls -**

In the case of mature bulls, the nutrition program should be based on the physical condition of the bulls at the start of the conditioning period. If they have wintered well, a high quality forage plus 5 to 7 pounds of grain will build the necessary energy reserves. If not, more grain will be required.

- **During the Breeding Season**

When young bulls are being used, one bull may be expected to breed 15 to 20 cows. When using mature bulls, the number of cows increases to 35 to 50 depending on the carrying capacity of the pasture and the condition of the bull going into the breeding season. During the breeding season the bulls should be observed to make sure they are getting the cows bred and that no injuries have occurred.

- **After the Breeding Season**

After the breeding season, bulls may be looked at as a "necessary evil" because they are not contributing to the profitability of the herd. However, they are an investment and should receive adequate care.

As bulls come out of the pastures, they should be evaluated and separated into two groups. Bulls which are in good condition and will need no special care should be placed in one group. Bulls in this condition can exist very well on an all roughage diets. Young bulls which are still growing and thin mature bulls should be placed together so their nutrient needs may be met with some supplemental feed. All bulls should have access to a high quality mineral.