

Make Sure Bulls Pass Breeding Test

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The potential economic consequences of a beef producer who tries to breed cattle with an infertile bull are huge, said Doug Shaw, Ohio State University Extension veterinarian.

A bull Breeding Soundness Examination, or BSE, can help ensure a successful breeding season by discovering bulls that have poor breeding potential and improving reproductive efficiency between bulls and cows.

Veterinarians may charge \$40

to \$100 to do a BSE, depending on how far they have to drive and how much they do. That may sound like a lot of money, but it could save a producer thousands of dollars, Shaw said.

For example, if a marginally fertile bull only breeds 30 of 50 cows during a breeding season, the producer loses the potential earnings from 20 feeder calves. If the 20 lost calves had eventually sold for about \$400 each, the producer could have earned an addi-

tional \$8,000 in gross income.

"Every cow should have a calf every year for a producer to be profitable in the cattle industry," Shaw said. "If a BSE helps save just one calf, it will cover its cost. So a BSE is certainly cost effective, even at the high end of the cost range."

There are three parts to a BSE. First, the veterinarian does a physical exam of the bull to see if it is physically capable of breeding a cow. Foot, leg, eye or other body

condition problems could lower a bull's breeding potential, Shaw said.

Second, semen is collected and evaluated. Bulls with low sperm counts or high percentages of abnormal sperm could have trouble getting cows pregnant, he said.

Third, the circumference of the scrotum is measured. The larger a bull's testes, the more semen it will produce. And, female calves produced by bulls with larger testes tend to mature faster.

"Scrotal circumference will vary with age and by breed, so producers need to know for each breed what is an appropriate size of testes for the age of the bull," Shaw said.

The missing link in a BSE is that it shows a bull has the physical potential to breed cows, but it doesn't prove a bull is socially and mentally capable, he said. Although rare, some bulls may have a poor sex drive or show aggressive or antisocial behavior that keeps them from breeding cows.

Producers should have a BSE done before buying a bull to be sure it is fertile. Young bulls just reaching maturity should be tested before being put with cows. Young bulls have lower semen production anyway, so they've got two strikes against them if a problem is revealed by a BSE, Shaw said. Approximately 11 percent of young bulls are either sterile or subfertile at 12 months to 14 months of age.

"If a bull produced a good calf crop last year, most producers won't think about having a BSE done before breeding this year, but bulls should be tested each year prior to breeding season," he said.

Breeding Soundness Examinations show that 4 percent of proven bulls develop fertility problems between breeding seasons. Heat stress during the summer can cause infertility, or severe frostbite in the winter can damage the scrotum.

A BSE also should be done after a bull has been sick. Any infectious disease that causes fever, such as pneumonia, can reduce sperm quality, so it's good to see if a bull is still properly producing semen after any illness, Shaw said.

Often bulls shouldn't be failed after their first test, especially if they are young. It's common to get a marginal or unsatisfactory semen sample from young bulls because they are not sexually competent yet, he said. Classification of young bulls as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory breeders should be delayed three to four weeks until a second semen sample can be taken, especially if there were any problems taking the first sample.

Classification also should be delayed if a bull recently has been sick. It can take two to three months for sperm cells damaged by sickness to return to normal.

"In reality, a truly sterile bull is rare, so we don't see many real disasters with breeding," Shaw said. "It's more common to find that a bull was subfertile and couldn't produce enough semen to get all the cows bred in the defined breeding season."

In Ohio, there are many beef producers with only 10 to 20 cows and one bull, and it may be difficult for them to justify having a BSE done. To make more efficient use of the veterinarian's time and make the examinations cheaper by splitting the veterinarian's travel costs, several producers in an area could bring their bulls to one site and have a BSE done to all the bulls at once, Shaw said. The only potential downside to this would be the possibility of spreading disease among the animals if one bull was sick.

For more information about Breeding Soundness Examinations, interested producers should call their local veterinarian or Ohio State University Extension Veterinary Medicine at (614) 292-9453.

Agricultural Societies Re-Elect Two Penn State Trustees

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Agricultural society delegates from throughout Pennsylvania recently re-elected two members to Penn State's board of trustees.

Representatives of local Grange chapters, farm bureaus, county fair boards, and other county-based organizations returned former state Agriculture Secretary Boyd E. Wolff of Dauphin County and Sen. Roger A. Madigan of Bradford County to the university's governing board for three-year terms that begin July 1 and end in 2001.

Agricultural societies elect six members of Penn State's 32-member board of trustees for staggered three-year terms. Other current trustees elected by agricultural delegates, with term expiration in parentheses, are Gordon L. Hiller (1999), former master, Pennsylvania State Grange; David A. Morrow (1999), consulting veterinarian and owner-manager, Arch Spring Farm; Carl T. Shaffer (2000), vice president, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau; and Obie Snider (2000), managing partner, Singing

Brook Farms.

Wolff received his bachelor's degree in dairy husbandry from Penn State in 1953. For the next 33 years, he owned and operated Wolfden Farm, a 410-acre dairy farm in Westmoreland County. He served as Pennsylvania secretary of agriculture from January 1987 to January 1995.

Wolff has been active in various agricultural, community, religious, and political organizations. In recognition of his many leadership and service activities, he has received numerous awards from agricultural organizations throughout Pennsylvania. He was named a distinguished alumnus by Penn State's Department of Dairy and Animal Science in 1988, was inducted into Gamma Sigma Delta in 1989, and received the Friend of Extension Award from Epsilon Sigma Phi in 1994. In 1995, the National FFA organization awarded Wolff the Honorary American Farmer Degree.

Wolff has held office in the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the North-eastern State Departments of

Agriculture, and the Eastern United States Food and Export Council. He was appointed to the Pennsylvania Ethics Commission in 1995 and has served as a VOCA volunteer in Venezuela and Russia.

Elected to the board of trustees by the delegates from agricultural societies in May 1984, Wolff served as an ex officio trustee while secretary of agriculture from 1987 to 1995. He was elected again by the delegates from agricultural societies in May 1995.

Madigan, who earned his bachelor's degree in dairy production from Penn State in 1951, was a dairyman from 1951 to 1964 and operates a 26-acre crop and certified tree farm near Towanda. He served as state representative in the General Assembly from the 110th District from 1977 to 1984, when he was elected to the state Senate representing the 23rd District.

Madigan is chairman of the Joint State Government Commission, as well as the Senate Environmental Resources and Ener-

gy Committee. He is vice chairman of the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee and a member of the Senate agriculture and rural affairs, appropriations, and labor and industries committees. He also is a member of the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee.

Madigan has won numerous awards and has been honored as "Legislator of the Year" by several trade and professional associations. In 1995, he was named a distinguished alumnus by Penn State's Department of Dairy and Animal Science.

Madigan is a trustee of the Guthrie Medical Center in Sayre and a member of The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center Board of Visitors. In May 1998, he was elected by Penn State's board of trustees as a director of the Agricultural Law Resource and Reference Center of the Dickinson School of Law.

In 1979, Madigan was appointed to serve on the board of trustees to fill an unexpired term ending in 1980.

Winners Named At West Central Youth Show

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spectively in the Jersey breed. Stephanie's summer yearling Lackey Juno Lilly Bell was named junior champion and Timmy showed his spring yearling to the reserve rosette.

Timmy Lacky also showed his senior three-year-old Conny Burn ALI Harmony to reserve grand champion. The grand champion Irishtowns Dunker Olie belonged to Kim Yeager, Greenville, Mercer County. Kim's champion was a senior two. The best owned and bred Jersey was Jem Specialist

Polly Poppy, a five-year-old, shown by Joy Ellen McConnell.

Lane Whiting of Edinburg, Lawrence County, showed her senior two-year-old Milking Shorthorn, Designer Gene's Bratts Roxy, to grand champion honors in that breed. Reserve grand champion went to Tom Reiser, Cranesville, Erie County, with his junior three-year-old GWR Big Red Speckle.

Donna Grace Philson of Mercer, Mercer County, showed Honey Creek Milli, a fall yearling to the junior champion honors. Re-

serve junior champion Milking Shorthorn went to Jessica M. Whiting, Edinburg, with her spring yearling Summit Vista Mt. Dew. Best animal bred and owned went to Rachel Anne Kline, Mars, Butler County, for her six-year-old, Mandy's Monica-Exp. Kline also showed the best owned and bred Ayrshire a fall calf named Kline Farm Dazzle.

The first and second place senior three-year-old Ayrshires, belonging to siblings Elaina and John Rader, Connoquenessing, Butler County, were named grand champion and reserve grand champion. Elaina's Homestead-Acres Cstar Stormy and John's

Homestead-Acres Cstar Superior received the champion and reserve honors respectively.

Entry number 294, Toll-Gate-Ayr Sunny Sue, a winter yearling shown by Heather Irene Bauder was selected as junior champion Ayrshire. Reserve junior champion went to Bobbi Jo Bauder with her spring yearling, Toll-Gate-Ayr Molly May.

The judges for the event were Creedin Corman, who placed the Holsteins, Guernseys, and Ayrshires and Chad Dechow From Penn State University. Dechow was responsible for selecting the winners in the Brown Swiss, Jersey, and Milking Shorthorn breeds.



Adam McMurry has the grand champion Guernsey. Beckle Ruffaner, Armstrong County dairy princess presents the award.



Jason Kennedy has the grand champion Brown Swiss.