



### Improving Bull Performance

Bulls are a costly & messy addition to your farming enterprise, getting bull power right promotes a condensed & efficient calving pattern, ultimately influencing the reproductive success of your herd. Here are some aspects which should not be ignored.

**Bull numbers depend on the number of cows still not pregnant at the end of the AB.**

The table below estimates the number of bulls needed depending on cow numbers & the percentage of the herd estimated to be pregnant at the start of the bull mating period. Remember that these numbers are the numbers of bulls that are needed in with the herd at any one time, so essentially you will need to double these numbers to allow for resting bulls.

#### Likely % Of Herd Pregnant At Start Of Bull Mating

No. cows in milking herd	Very low (less than 40%)	Low (40-50%)	Moderate (50-70%)	High (more than 70%)
100	2-4	2-3	2	2
200	5-6	4-5	3	2
300	7-8	6	4-5	3
400	9-11	7-8	5-6	3-4
500	12-13	9-10	7	4-5
600	14-15	11-12	8-9	5-6

*Table reproduced from DairyNZ's InCalf Bull Management Practices Tool.*

**Bull selection- Choosing bulls that are tall enough is paramount.**

Bulls that are too short or under-grown will not be able to perform. Usually, selecting two year old bulls is a good idea for your herd as yearling bulls are often too small. Well grown 18month old bulls are the perfect size & ability.

**Testicle size is a rough indicator of bull fertility.** If two bulls are the same age, the bull with a bigger scrotal circumference is usually more fertile.

**BVD testing & vaccination is also vital.**



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There is no point in vaccinating animals for BVD that have not first been tested clear of the virus. Bulls born with BVD will not respond to vaccination, so animals should be tested first to prove they are not persistently infected (PI). Bulls need two shots before they are ready to work so the BVD vaccination programme needs to begin five to six weeks before bull mating begins.

**Bulls become fatigued & will not inseminate cows effectively if they are tired or lame.** Resting your bulls for two to three days & working them for two to three days is advisable. Alternatively, day & night bulls can be used.

**Lame bulls should be swapped out immediately.** Lame bulls will be infertile because they often have high temperatures & will be less keen to mount cows. You will need enough bulls to have bulls resting & possibly having spare bulls on farm should be considered.

### Metrichecking- Easy and economic

'Dirty Cows' do not show any signs of being sick & they often look like normal healthy cows. We can find the 'Dirty Cows' by using a quick, cost effective & simple method called metrichecking.

Dirty cows were thought to be more likely in cows that have had retained foetal membranes (RFM), twins, milk fever, an assisted calving &/or a dead calf. However, when whole herds are metrichecked, up to 71% of dirty cows weren't considered 'At Risk'.

Dirty cows result in lower conception & 6-week in calf rates, higher empty rates of up to 30% & if they do get pregnant it can take 2 to 3 weeks longer than cows without endometritis. There is a positive return on investment to whole herd metrichecking when there are more than 2% of dirty cows, which is probably >95% of herds in New Zealand.

Traditionally we have metrichecked the whole herd in one go, at least 35 days before the start of mating, to give the treated cows time to cure before mating starts.

A recent New Zealand study showed that if you metricheck in batches starting 2 to 4 weeks following calving, it gave a 9.6% improvement in the 6-week in-calf-rate & a 3% higher 12-week in-calf-rate, compared to late treated cows i.e. cows treated a month prior to mating.

So, there are some real positive benefits for identifying & treating cows early.

### Foaling Time

For those of you that are expecting foals this year please make sure your mares have had the pre foaling vaccinations. These are given preferably four weeks out from the expected date of foaling. Tetanus and Strangles as a bare minimum. Salmonella is an option as is herpes virus.

Worm the mare with either Ultramox or 5 days of Panacur, in the week prior to foaling.

If foaling at home the mare must have a clean paddock with the ability to monitor her overnight. Most live foal guarantees will have stipulations around this.

Please make sure you know of the stages of labour and when to call us. Contact the clinic if you think the mare is imminent **IN DAYTIME** rather than phoning the vet at 11pm.

If foaling away the mare needs a week or so to settle in to her new environment.

After foaling colostrum transfer is vital and if in any doubt of either the quality of colostrum (if the mare has been dripping) or the foal is late to suckle then a blood test at 24 hours of age can rapidly quantify this and hyper immune serum can be given. This is a life saver.

The mare needs to have expelled her afterbirth within 4 hours, If not please phone 0800 HORSEVETS (0800 46 77 38).

Pre-emptive antibiotics and anti inflammatory medications can ward off some very serious conditions including laminitis which in the larger mare can be particularly difficult to manage.

If you are intending to breed at the goal heat we should be examining the mare in safe stocks as soon as possible to ascertain if any damage has been caused during the foaling.

Good luck everyone  
From the HorseVets Team



#### SERVICE AWARD FOR AVS STALWART

**THE 2018 AUCKLAND** Vet Society (AVS) Service Award was presented to Robyn Jarrett at the recent AGM. Robyn is a long-time member of the AVS, and has achieved widespread recognition in the community through various business awards, as a contributor to AVS meetings and through the development of a new approach to treating feline nasal squamous cell carcinoma, with the assistance of her human skin specialist husband. ■

