

## VET'S VIEW

**Grant Dewell, DVM**  
*Veterinary Diagnostic and Production Animal  
Medicine, Iowa State University*

### Running of the Bulls

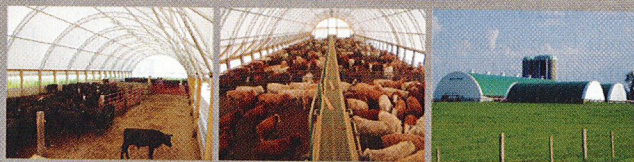
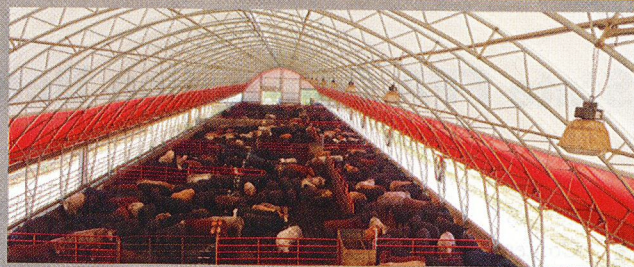
The annual Running of the Bulls in Pamplona, Spain is July 6-14. If you are really interested in participating, you can probably still make travel plans. However, a less risky but more critical event takes place in June and you don't have to travel far. For many Iowa cattle producers June marks the traditional time for bull turn out to breeding pastures. Although turning bulls out onto a breeding pasture is not as electrifying as turning bulls onto a crowded street, it still brings inspiration to cattle producers. The future of the operation is fixin' to happen in the next month or month or two.

Prior to turn out, bulls should have had a breeding soundness exam and be in good condition. A bull that is working hard may lose a couple hundred pounds during the breeding season so he needs to be in good flesh prior to turn out. During the breeding season check bulls regularly to make sure they are still in good health. A lame bull is not going to be able to breed and should be replaced in the pasture. As temperatures warm up some bulls may decrease their breeding activity. It may be advantageous to replace these bulls with fresh bulls that may have stronger libido and are willing to work through the heat.

It is a good idea to evaluate the estrus level in the cows 21-30 days into the breeding season. Generally, a lot of poor herd fertility is not detected until the fall at preg check time or maybe at calving. Unfortunately, trying to diagnose the cause of poor fertility during the breeding season is almost impossible 6 - 9 months after the fact. Ideally, about 2/3 of the cows should have conceived during the first 21 days of the breeding season, leaving about 1/3 that are not pregnant. Therefore, on average there should only be 1-2% of the cows in heat per day during the second 21 days. If there are too many cows in heat then the bulls should be re-evaluated and consider testing cows for potential reproductive diseases. One option is if you are handling the cattle to administer fly tags or vaccinate the calves as a part of a preconditioning program, you can also apply heat detection patches to some cows so it is easier to identify if they are cycling. If possible, watch the bull activity to determine which bulls are active and which ones are not.

As the breeding season progresses, consider removing some of the bulls from multi-bull pastures. As the number of cycling cows decreases, there may be more competition between bulls for these limited cows. Removing some of the bulls can decrease the likelihood of fighting injuries late in the breeding season.

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