

Breeding Soundness Exam Day:

Encouraging Fertility Management among local Beef Producers

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Background

Herd uniformity resulting from a shortened breeding season enhances the marketability of beef cattle. Reproductive issues within a herd can jeopardize profitability. A bull breeding soundness exam (BSE) is a widely accepted best management practice for monitoring bull fertility annually, yet many producers neglect BSEs. Not all cattle working facilities are conducive to working with larger more aggressive animals, particularly those facilities used by small and beginning farmers.

Program Objectives

1. Educate local beef cattle producers as to what a bull BSE is and the importance of having one performed annually on each herd bull.
2. Encourage local beef cattle producers to obtain a BSE on each herd bull annually by removing obstacles (ex: facilities, cost) and incentivize through convenience and economic savings.



Dr. Thomas McNair at August 2022 Oglethorpe County Cattlemen's Association meeting sharing BSE procedures and data collection

Education and Promotion

A digital presentation was developed and delivered in partnership with a local veterinarian at a meeting of the local Cattlemen's Association. The agent and veterinarian taught the importance of a BSE on an annual basis for every service bull in a herd and the specific data gathered by each exam. Producers were then informed of a BSE haul-in opportunity to be offered making the recommended exams more accessible and affordable.

BSE Day

- In-kind sponsorship was secured from a local livestock market for use of an appropriate facility.
- A discounted rate was offered on exams as well as a free option of vaccination and deworming.
- Each bull had a scheduled appointment time. When producers arrived, they spent approximately 5 minutes being surveyed by the hosting agent before unloading animals.
- Extension volunteers and UGA graduate students provided assistance throughout the day.
- A complete exam was performed on each bull by a licensed veterinarian using Society for Theriogenology guidelines.
- Semen mobility was assessed on site.
- Producers were provided immediate feedback on data collected and also received a follow up report from the veterinarian with semen morphology.
- Average time on site per bull less than 30 minutes.
- Producers were given the option of leaving unsatisfactory bulls at the facility to sell in an upcoming auction.



Local beef producers were able to watch Dr. McNair and staff perform BSE and ask questions related to reproductive health of their bulls



The local weekly newspaper published a feature article about the program, providing additional research-based information on BSEs to a circulation of approximately 3000 households

Results

- \$1,050 monetary and in-kind sponsorships
- 46 farmers attended a BSE lecture and 9 brought 15 total bulls in for an exam
- Survey data of production practices was collected from 9 farms representing around 640 cow/calf pairs and 2110 acres of farmland

Breeding Soundness Exam Data Summary									
Farm	Bull ID	Breed	Body Condition	Weight (lb)	Age	Physical Exam	Semen Mobility	% Normal Semen Cells	Classification
1	323	Hereford	4	1730	4 yrs	Good	Adequate	93	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
1	M117	Angus	5	1700	4 yrs	Good	Adequate	72	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
1	350	Angus	4	1100	18 mo	Good	Adequate	62	Classification Deferred
2	A905	Angus	6	1890	3 yrs	Good	Adequate	90	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
2	0712	Hereford	5	1680	3 yrs	Good	Adequate	73	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
3	53085	Angus	4	1995	4 yrs	Foot corns present	Adequate	88	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
4	W1064	Angus	6		2 yrs	Good	Adequate	71	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
5	BR	Hereford	4	1980	6-10 yrs	Large foot corns	N/A**	N/A**	Unsatisfactory
6	2	Sim Angus	7	1920	2 yrs	Good	Adequate	very low	Classification Deferred
6	146j	Sim Angus	7	1325	14 mo	Good	Adequate	75	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
7	500	Cross	5	1035	22 mo	Good	Adequate	96	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
8	603E	Beefmaster	7	1690	4 yrs	Good	Adequate	90	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
8	11316	Brahman	6	1350	2 yrs	Good	Adequate	87	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
9	1	Hereford	5		12 mo	Good	Adequate	Adequate	Satisfactory Potential Breeder
9	2	Sim Angus	4		5 yrs	Good	Adequate	Adequate	Satisfactory Potential Breeder

*Classification Deferred: bulls were recommended to re-test in 30 days **unable to collect semen sample

Impacts/Future Implications

- Both objectives were met and positive feedback was received from 100% of participants. A BSE day is planned to continue annually.
- An "unsatisfactory" bull in good working shape last year was set to service 36 females. The owner indicated on the pre-exam survey calf sales of around \$650 each. The economic loss avoided due to a BSE being performed was \$23,400.
- Information collected from surveys and exams will be used for future reporting, journal articles, fact sheets, and presentations.



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