

Buying Bulls – the pocket book checklist

Your Breeding Objective...

Consider the following points relating to the performance of your current herd, your herds environment and potential bulls for purchase. Then make a list of:

- Traits of economic importance
- Current herd performance
- Customer / market requirements
- Breeding goals and selection criteria and prioritise

Consider the traits and breed most suitable to your environment.

Temperament...

Select genetically quiet or docile bulls to increase the probability of progeny that will be more tractable or quieter, higher growth rate and animals that transport better.

Understanding the Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation

The Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BBSE) was developed by the Australian Association of Cattle Veterinarians to standardise bull fertility.

The report indicates whether a bull has met a set of standards for five bull fertility components. The fertility components assessed are those that indicate that a bull has a high probability, but not guarantee, of being fertile.

The two components of the BBSE are:

i A *summary* of the five indicative components of bull fertility (see example below)

Bull Number/Name - AACV Top of the Rack

Age Yr:Mn - 2.02

Scrotum	Physical	Semen	Morphology	Serving
37.0 cm	√	√	P	nt

ii A *full report* that identifies the bull, date of testing and by whom, where and comments associated with each test.

The five components of bull fertility in the BBSE:

Scrotum – Scrotal circumference/size (SS) in centimetres (cm) where testes shape is within normal range

Physical – Within the constraints of a standard examination, there is no evidence of any general physical/structural condition or of a physical condition of the reproductive tract indicating sub-fertility or infertility. This evaluation will identify structurally unsound bulls in legs, feet, sheath, and general structure.

Semen – Crush-side assessment indicates that the semen is within normal range for motility, colour, and percent progressively motile and is suitable for laboratory evaluation.

Morphology – Semen examination of percent normal sperm using high power magnification to ensure minimum standards for normal function are achieved.

Serving – The bull is able to serve normally as demonstrated in a standard test and shows no evidence of fertility limiting defects.

Understanding Estimated Breeding Values

Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) are predictions of an animal's genetic merit, based on available performance data on the individual and its relatives.

EBVs are expressed in the units of measurement for each particular trait. They are shown as +ve or -ve differences from the breed base (or breed average). EBVs provide the best basis for the comparison of the genetic merit of animals reared in different environments and management conditions. EBVs can only be used to compare animals with the **same** breed.

The differences in EBVs between animals are more important than the absolute value of the EBV. Particular animals should be viewed as being "above breed average" for a particular trait only if their EBVs are better than the average EBVs of all animals born in their year drop.

EBVs are published for a range of traits including fertility, growth and carcass merit. When using EBVs to assist in selection decisions it is important to achieve **balance** between the different groups of traits and to place emphasis on those traits that are important to your herd, your markets and your environment,

Tick resistance rating

Tremere Pastoral measures Tick resistance between February and April (animal is about 15 months of age). Tick resistance is measured by counting the number of mature ticks carried on one side of an animal, at the time of a sufficient natural tick challenge. The animals are then rated using the below 5 point scale.

> Very high resistance (VH)	10 or fewer observable ticks
> High resistance (H)	11 to 30 observable ticks
> Average resistance (A)	31 to 80 observable ticks
> Low resistance (L)	81 to 150 observable ticks
> Very low resistance (VL)	Greater than 150 observable ticks

Pen Score for Temperament

The animals were assessed while being photographed as individuals and scored as follows:

- 0 - The animal would stand calmly and scratched with the yard stick.
- 1 - The animal would stand calmly and could be approached to within the length of the yard stick.
- 2 - The animal would stand calmly but would move away when approached.
- 3 - The animal did not settle but did not cause any handling difficulty.
- 4 or 5 - The animal was culled for poor temperament.

Flight Time

Flight time is a measure of how fast an animal covers a distance of 2.0 metres after leaving the vet crush. The measure is positively correlated to meat tenderness, increased weight gain in feedlots and quieter temperament.