



Bohaty Farm Bulletin

June 2011

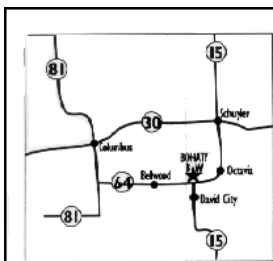
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Directions from
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15 and 64 (★)
1/2 mile west to a
white church. 1
mile north, 3/4
mile east, south
side.

**Bohaty's British Whites
Walter & Nancy Bohaty
1371 42nd Road
Bellwood, NE 68624
402-367-4741
Email: nbohaty@gmail.com
www.britishcattle.com**

Breeding Soundness Exams

By Kenny Barrett Jr., DVM, MS

Excerpts from 5/14/11 Tri-State Livestock News—

Spring is a busy time of year. There is a mix of cattle work & field preparations that should have been done last week.

But ranchers need to pause & consider their bull pen well in advance of the breeding season.

Bulls are easily overlooked as they are normally tucked away for the winter & calving season. One important cattle management tool is to ensure the bulls are in good health & able to breed cows well before the breeding season. A breeding soundness exam (BSE) is a comprehensive evaluation of a bull & his predicted fertility. Evaluating herd bulls about 60 days prior to turn out can help ensure each herd has an adequate number of capable bulls, allow time to reevaluate if needed and purchase any necessary replacement animals.

A breeding soundness exam consists of 2 main parts: the physical exam & a reproductive evaluation. Each bull needs to be evaluated for body condition, structural soundness & overall health. Bulls that lack condition & are generally unthrifty will have decreased sperm production & are less likely to settle a large number of cows on the first cycle.

Likewise, breeding animals need to be able to cover the breeding pasture to find the cows in heat. Lamé bulls are likely to experience some difficulty attending to their romantic needs. Most lameness occurs in the foot & includes infectious diseases like footrot and well as genetic defects such as corkscrew claw. Aberrations that decrease the number of females becoming pregnant within the first cycle decreases calf crop uniformity, weaning weight & percentage of pregnant females at the end of the season.

The reproductive exam consists of palpating the reproductive organs, evaluating the penis function, & a microscopic evaluation of the semen. Rectal

palpation allows examination of the seminal vesicles, size & shape of the pelvis, inguinal rings, & other lesser reproductive structures. The seminal vesicles produce assessor fluid for the ejaculate, but can become infected, negatively impacting fertility. The scrotum needs to have a normal shape & size. A larger scrotum is associated with earlier puberty in female offspring. Additionally, larger testes have a greater capacity to produce sperm & should be able to service more cows in a shorter time period. Unusually sized or asymmetrical testes can be an indication of testicular disease. More importantly, the testes need to move freely within the scrotum to allow for normal temperature control.

Electro ejaculators are commonly used to cause ejaculation for semen evaluation. They commonly cause extension & erection allowing for a visual exam of the penis. Reproductive warts frequently hemorrhage during copulation, leading to decreased viability of the sperm & should be removed. Other defects such as persistent frenulum, prepuce injury, abscess, etc. can be diagnosed at this time.

Collected semen is microscopically evaluated for motility & morphology. Motility is an estimate of the proportion of sperm exhibiting forward movement. Those moving backwards or with drunken movement should not be counted. Morphology is the microscopic appearance of the individual sperm. Here a veterinarian is looking for bent or coiled tails, midpiece defects & abnormalities of the acrosome & head. If the number of normal motile sperm falls below a specified threshold, the bull is deferred or fails the exam. Young animals may fail their initial exam but may pass subsequent exams with increased maturity. It should be noted that bulls can pass a breeding soundness exam & fail to settle cows due to poor libido. Venereal diseases are not routinely tested for & can reduce fertility & abortions.

BSE's are a form of reproductive insurance to help ensure bulls are able to breed cows efficiently.