

News Release

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Don't Mix Bulls

Producers often ask about the use of young bulls in the same breeding pasture with older, larger bulls. In most instances, this is a practice that should be discouraged if at all possible.

Young bulls will almost always lose the battle in the war of who is the dominant individual in the breeding pasture. Ranchers report that in some cases young bulls that have been severely "whipped" are less aggressive breeders after that incident.

Australian research data on multi-sire pastures have shown that some young bulls gain a dominant role as they mature and breed a larger percentage of the cows presented to them. However, other bulls that never gain a dominant status will only breed a very small percentage of the cows in pastures containing a mix of bulls from young to mature.

The best solution is to always place young bulls with young bulls and mature bulls with mature bulls in breeding pastures. In some situations, many ranchers choose to use the mature bulls during the first two-thirds of the breeding season, and end up the season with a rotation of young bulls behind them.

This allows the young bulls to gain one to two months of additional age and sexual maturity before they are expected to perform. In addition, the young bulls should have considerably fewer cows in heat at the end of the breeding season as the mature bulls will have already bred the majority of the cows or heifers.

The young bulls will be in the breeding season only a few weeks and should not be "run down" or in extremely poor body condition at the conclusion of the breeding season. Bull management is a major key in cow/calf operation profitability. While there is not a single best way to handle all bulls, in all situations, using common sense in what producers are asking a bull to accomplish goes a long way in enhancing the total number of years a bull can remain serviceable in a cattle operation.

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