

Bull Buying & Leasing Checklist



Before making your service-bull buying or leasing decisions, make sure that you've ticked off everything on this checklist. Help ensure a successful natural mating period.

Checklist:

- They are virgin bulls
Rule of thumb: *virgin bulls are less likely to pass on venereal diseases to your cows*
- If they are not virgin bulls, you have discussed relevant venereal disease testing, e.g. Trichomoniasis and Campylobacter, with your vet
- They are all disease tested and/or vaccinated to your vet's recommendation e.g. BVD, TB, Johnes disease, Leptospirosis; find out what's appropriate.
Rule of thumb: *BVD tested as virus-clear is different from just being BVD vaccinated*
- Health: You have BVD and other disease test results in your own hands; you know the disease history of the bulls and of their farm of origin. They have not been ill with a fever in the last 2 months.
Rule of thumb: *It can be 2 months before normal fertility is regained after a fever or sickness*
- They are sexually mature with adequate testicular size and tone for their age, and libido
Rule of thumb: *they should be 15 months or older, a vet-check is a good idea for service bulls.*
- Calving ease is suitable for the group to be mated e.g. are they mating cows or heifers?
Rule of thumb: *look for bulls with low birthweight and high calving ease breeding values*
- They are tall enough to effectively mate your cows/heifers and are physically sound. They have sound feet, good locomotion scores and no horns!
- They are not too heavy for your cows/heifers (to minimise injury risk to cows)
Rule of thumb: *they need to be less than 100kg heavier than your cows/heifers*
- The bulls are 3 years old or less
Rule of thumb: *younger bulls are less likely to injure your cows or to have back or penile injuries/ defects.*
- Bulls are of good temperament for safe handling, and your facilities are adequate to handle or house them
- Staff are adequately equipped, fully-trained in handling of bulls, and know the process to report incidents
- You have ordered enough bulls - enough bulls for two teams (for rotation) and spares in case a bull/s become lame or injured
Rule of thumb: *1 bull/20 heifers + a spare, and two teams of 1 bull/30 non-pregnant cows + a spare*
- They are in good BCS for the 2-3 months before they will be put in with the herd (when the sperm are being produced that will be ejaculated during mating)
Rule of thumb: *the target BCS at mating for bulls is 4.5 - 5.5 (New Zealand scale)*
- They will arrive on farm in time to sort out their pecking order and to get over the truck ride and any injuries from fighting
Rule of thumb: *picking bulls from the same mob can help reduce the fighting when they arrive on farm*

Always play it safe with bulls!