

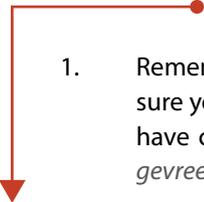


Beef Cattle

FARMING and **FERTILITY**

(take home messages)

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1. Remember a beef cattle farmer is firstly a veld and pasture farmer. Make sure your animals nutritional requirements are met especially when they have calves and are running with the bull. *Sorg altyd dat jou beeste dik gevreet is maw. goeie voervloei beplanning (fodderflow).*
 2. The most important economic aspect of any cattle farming enterprise is fertility. Its 5X more important than growth. Growth is 5X more important than carcass quality. *'n Swak groeiende kalf is altyd beter as geen kalf.*
 3. Remember fertility has two components nl. management and genetic. Management has more to do with feeding and animal health. Also strict breeding seasons so as to establish which animals are not reproducing. *Teelseisoene maak dit maklik om nie produseerders uit te ken en te verkoop.*
 4. When we talk about the genetic component of fertility one sees fertility is only 10% heritable. We must look for other genetic traits positively correlated with fertility to help us eg. scrotal size and mature mass and a fertility index....they are expressed as EBV's of teelwaardes.
 5. Scrotal size in bulls plays a major role in fertility of the female offspring. The bigger the better (upto a point). Look at the scrotal size ebv's of the bulls you buy as well as physically at the scrotal development. *Dws teelbalontwikkeling.*
 6. Mature mass must always be kept in check. The ebv for mature mass should ideally be around breed average. We want easy calvers, fast growing calves BUT not big mature cattle round 3 years of age. This is because big cattle have high maintenance requirements. They have to satisfy these before they can go over into production and reproduction. *Te groot volwasse diere is minder produktief.*
 7. Days to calving is a fertility index and like all EBV's it takes the environmental effect out so that we are only looking at the genetic component. If a breed has this index USE IT in your selection. It identifies bulls and females that carry the genes producing fertile progeny.
 8. Remember that a bull has a 50% genetic influence on the herd of females that he gets into calf. The last three bulls have a 87.5% genetic influence. Therefore buy and use the bulls with the correct fertility and growth attributes. *Gebruik bulle met goeie vrugbaarheid en groei teelwaardes.*
 9. Use the correct bull/cow ratio and test bulls regularly for fertility and sexually transmitted diseases such as trichomoniasis and vibriosis.
 10. Remember your early calvers in a season are the more fertile animals. The more you shorten your calving season the more fertile your herd will become. The ideal is that 60% of your females should calve in the first 30 days of the season. *Die vroeë kalwende diere is gewoonlik die vrugbaarste.*
 11. A few more tips: Look after your heifers so that they mostly all take bull in a short period. Also look after first calvers well nutritionally – they are often the ones that struggle to reconceive. *Pas verse en eerstekalkkoeie goed op –gee hulle die beste kos.* Rule of thumb: heifers round 350 kg can go to the bull.
 12. Remember hybrid vigour increases fertility AND growth AND longevity. It pays to cross breeds BUT it must be done in a structured way. *Kruistelling werk MAAR dit moet georden gedoen word bv. 'n crisscross sisteem of 'n 3 way cross met die derde ras as terminale vaar.*
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