



PROFIT MAKER

Bull Evaluation Center is Unique to Industry

There's a 1,000-head capacity cattle lot just east of Ogallala, Neb., that will turn your head. It's a state of the art arrangement with high-tensile fencing, hydraulic squeeze chutes, grounded, freeze-proof waterers and just about every other innovation you can imagine.

But what really sets the operation apart is in this 1,000-head herd you won't find a single heifer, steer or any animal over two years old. Sound like a lot of bull?

Actually, it's nothing but bull— 1,000 of the best purebred bulls in the country, that is ... all in one spot. The operation, Profit Maker Bulls, is a joint venture between several breeders of purebred cattle. Chuck Graff is managing partner of the organization, which specializes in Angus, Charolais and Gelbvieh breeds. The bulls come from herds in Montana, Colorado and Nebraska, with others coming from as far away as Indiana. Profit Maker Bulls isn't just a test station, either. There's a lot more to it.

"Bulls from the respective herds are sent here at weaning time where we evaluate the bulls for their performance, growth, pelvic score and other factors. We send that information back to the owners," says Graff. "We're a little bit different from other bull test stations because the entire calf crop is sent here for merchandising, as well as evaluation."

Bull sales are conducted each December and March in Ogallala, which has

one of the largest sale barns in the Midwest. That, plus its central location, is why the southwestern Nebraska city was chosen as the home of Profit Maker Bulls. The company also conducts sales in Wyoming and Texas, with another substantial part of its business coming from individual sales.

Those 1,000 bulls are divided into 22 pens on the 70-acre lot. That provides ample room for the feeding operation, which is necessary when dealing strictly with bulls. They are fed twice a day on a limited feed ration designed for an average daily gain of 3.25 pounds. With the surrounding fertile Platte River Valley area providing an ample supply of high-quality feed, the bulls receive a ration consisting of corn silage, high-moisture corn and alfalfa hay.

Like any other feedlot where cattle from different areas are grouped, diseases — especially the shipping fever complex — are a major concern. Most, if not all, of the vaccination programs for the bulls are completed at the owner's ranch before they are shipped. But, there are exceptions.

"The ranchers are required to send along an immunization form outlining what vaccinations their bulls have received. If any need follow-up boosters, they get them here," Graff explains. "We've had really good luck with the bulls; death loss is under 1/2 percent,



Chuck Graff (left) and Dr. Rich Paumer make recommendations for the Profit Maker Bull herd health program.

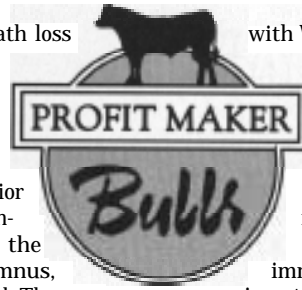
thanks to the immunizations. That 1/2 percent death loss is almost strictly from bloat."

That doesn't mean disease outbreaks are non-existent at the lot. Graff counts on Rich Paumer, D.V.M., Animal Clinic & Pharmacy, for assistance in the animal-health area. Dr. Paumer has set up a recommended on-ranch vaccination program prior to arrival of the bulls at the lot. The program concentrates on the respiratory diseases. That means the bulls should be vaccinated for Haemophilus somnus, IBR, PI3, BVD and Bovine RSV before being shipped. The majority are vaccinated, but. . .

"In the past couple of years we've had some breaks with different groups of bulls coming in at various times. Just like other operations, there are cattle that are hauled farther than others," says Dr. Paumer. "They're just calves, so you're going to have the same sort of weaning problems that any backrounder will have, too. It's mostly respiratory problems."

Those are easily handled and the vaccination programs have proven very successful. Still, there are other problems that crop up in dealing with that many purebred bulls. Graff and Dr. Paumer decided to take one of the biggest of those problems head-on this past year and are convinced of their success and positive return on investment.

"We handle roughly 1,000 bulls a year and between 20 percent to 25 percent of them are culled due to performance, structural soundness, injuries and such," says Graff. "Another problem we've run into in the past, cost us about 2 percent of the bulls. They had to be slaughtered due to warts on the penis which were non-removable or, if they were removed, caused so much damage the bull couldn't be put into service. Dr. Paumer and I visited last fall and decided to try vaccinating all the bulls



with Wart Shield™ (Grand Laboratories, Inc.). We liked the cost and the dosage level. It was successful and we'll continue using it.

"We wanted to eliminate those losses and we accomplished that. I think we only had one or two bulls that still developed warts out of 1,000. In today's bull market, that provides me with a \$10 return on a \$1 investment quite easily," he adds.

Wart Shield is a killed vaccine designed to build immunity against papilloma virus, the cause of warts in cattle. It also produces immunity against the cancer cell which is a combination of the virus and tumor cell RNA and DNA. The vaccine is administered subcutaneously in varying dosages, depending on the size and age of the bull. It's labeled to be boosted in 3 to 4 weeks after initial vaccination. For an operation such as Profit Maker Bulls, Wart Shield makes a lot of sense, according to both Graff and Dr. Paumer.

"It's a young bull-type problem, mostly seen in the yearlings and the two-year-old bulls. After that, it's not a worry because the body's immune system takes care of it," says Dr. Paumer. "The problem we've seen is if the bull has a bad enough wart and you surgically remove it, then that bull has to be rechecked and re-extended with the probe. A lot of times the wart will regrow or maybe there's more than one wart and surgically taking them off isn't enough. All of those things prevent the marketing of that bull. Of course this wart vaccine helps eliminate any warts developing initially."

The success of the vaccine has prompted its inclusion in the mandatory initial handling process of all the incoming bulls. It has helped produce more profitable bulls for Graff, his partners and his bull-buying customers.