

Osteoarthritis. This is a term most people know via first or second hand experience. Chances are, if osteoarthritis hasn't affected you personally, it has affected someone you know. Although osteoarthritis is most often associated with humans, it does occur in cattle as well. This week we will briefly discuss our fourth insidious disease of the series and talk about the considerable impact that it has on cattle.

Similar to cases detected in humans, osteoarthritis in cattle should not be taken lightly. It is a result of wear and tear on the body over time, created by a breakdown of cartilage in the joints. As the cartilage diminishes, the bones are then without the cushion they need to keep from rubbing against each other. This rubbing together, or friction, of the bones causes joint damage, pain, and swelling.

Despite osteoarthritis being a result of natural wear and tear on the body, this process is drastically sped up in animals that have poor skeletal structure or conformation, or in cattle such as bulls that have added physical demands put on their bodies. That is one reason why it is imperative that the bulls you use on your cows be physically sound, and not be post-legged or have other conformation issues. Once these unsound bulls reach mature weight, their bodies will not be able to meet the physical demands of mounting and dismounting cows to breed. The poor structure, combined with wear and tear on the joints, will result in a bull that is not getting your cows bred. Often times, this issue is not detected because the bull will pass a fertility test. However, once he is in the pasture, he may be in too much pain to mount cows to service them, resulting in open cows and a low calf-crop percentage.

Although osteoarthritis is something that occurs naturally in many situations, it CAN be prevented in your operation. Select for bulls and females that are physically sound, free of structural problems. Further, keep in mind the physical demands that you are putting on the bulls. Ensure that you have proper bull to cow ratio for breeding so that the bulls are not over worked. If you have any questions about selecting bulls for your operation, or would like more information on osteoarthritis, please contact us.

The Oklahoma National Stockyard prices for feeder steers medium and large 1 sold on Monday, September 12, 2016 are as follows: 474lb- \$145.21, 597lb- \$143.54, 691lb- \$139, and 778lb- \$136.35. The price for October 2016 feeder steers on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange was \$131.5 at opening September 16, 2016.

Thanks,
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