

# Protect your farm from *Mycoplasma bovis* – Managing service bulls

## MANAGING SERVICE BULLS

- The main way *Mycoplasma bovis* spreads from farm to farm is by the movement of infected animals.
- Once on farm, the disease spreads through close contact between animals, and consumption of infected milk.
- Bulls are considered low risk, but they do have the potential to spread the disease.
- *Mycoplasma bovis* is considered to be contained to the known infected farms, and some other farms that are under stock movement controls, so the risk from farms not under stock movement control (most farms in New Zealand) is very low.

## CHECK THE SOURCE HERD BEFORE PURCHASING OR LEASING BULLS

Understand the health history of the source herd. A bull soundness exam, a current leptospirosis and BVD vaccination history, and recent BVD testing is recommended as normal practice.

Has the source herd had:

- atypical mastitis (lactating cows);
- atypical lameness (calves, young stock, cows or bulls);
- swollen joints (calves, young stock, cows or bulls);
- pneumonia (particularly calves, but also growing and adult stock).

Note that farms with *Mycoplasma bovis* may have no animals with obvious clinical signs.

A pre-purchase checklist can help with this, and can be found here

<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/media/5787884/myco-bovis-pre-purchase-checklist-aug-2017.pdf>

Knowing the health status and history of animals entering your farm helps protect the health status of your own herd.

## MANAGING BULLS ONCE THEY ARRIVE

Once the bulls arrive on farm, keep them separate from the herd for a few days so their health status can be monitored.

Watch for lameness, especially swollen joints (arthritis), and any signs of respiratory disease.

*Mycoplasma bovis* can cause disease in the reproductive tract in both cows and bulls. This could have an impact on reproductive performance so it is important to monitor submission and conception rates.

Seek veterinary advice early if you are concerned about the health of your cattle.

## BULLS RETURNING TO SOURCE HERDS AT THE END OF MATING

If leasing bulls out for mating, and it is usual practice to take them back to your farm at the end of mating, it is recommended that:

- bulls are quarantined on their return for 7 days; and
- bulls are checked for lameness, especially swollen joints (arthritis), and any signs of respiratory disease.

Seek veterinary advice early if you are concerned about the health of your cattle.



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