

Fertility testing means dollars in the bank for cattle producers

Cattle producer Matt Gooderham says his backgrounding operation owes part of its success to early and accurate identification of pregnancy. He has been using an accredited Australian Cattle Veterinarians (ACV) member to scan for pregnancy (PREgCHECK™) and test bull fertility (BULLCHECK™) for more than five years – and the findings deliver him direct production benefits.

Snapshot

Producer	Matthew Gooderham
Location	"Araluen", Goondiwindi, QLD
Property area	2100 ha
Enterprises	500 head cattle + agistment Fodder crops
Soil types	Sodic clay
Annual rainfall	525mm
Veterinarian	Dr Anna Gates
Enterprise	Goondiwindi & District Veterinary Services
Location	Goondiwindi QLD

Matt's livestock business is based on a core breeding herd (run on agistment up into central Queensland), from which he backgrounds cattle for sale.

"We bring all our young stock and sale stock to our property 'Araluen', where we join our heifers and calve them out," Matt says. "After calving, they go onto a fodder crop and are joined again, and then enter the core breeding herd."

Fertility testing with PREgCHECK™ and BULLCHECK™ have changed many of Matt's husbandry practices, with better results.

"We used to do a six week joining, but because of better market flexibility, plus the improved accuracy of our pregnancy testing, we've expanded that to 12 week joining," says Matt.

"PREgCHECK™ means we can identify pregnancy at a very early stage – around 35 days after joining instead of three months after.

"Knowing which heifers have gone into calf in the first two cycles, we can identify those that will go into our core breeding herd, and those that will go into the sale lot instead.

"The early detection means we can turn off dry heifers two months earlier."

Matt is also a big believer in the value of BULLCHECK™, using it once a year on each of his bulls, regardless of age.

"Bulls cost \$8,000 to \$10,000. We single-sire wherever possible, and we might be joining one bull to 70-plus cows, so it's critical our bulls don't have fertility problems," says Matt.

"BULLCHECK™ involves a full examination and testing to make sure all our bulls are fit and sound and up to the job."

Having a vet on the property regularly brings other benefits too, including picking up wider health and fertility issues across the herd.

"This year was a prime example of those benefits," says Matt. "We had an issue with animals not looking quite right. Thanks to the vet, we identified it very early on as a respiratory disease that we don't normally see around here.

Matthew Gooderham and his wife Brigitte pictured on their property ""Araluen", Goondiwindi, QLD



“A few years back I saw that at certain times our cattle just weren’t performing the way they should. With the vet’s advice we did some tests on the soil and found out it was copper deficient – again, not something we normally see in our soils.

“As soon as we identified that and started with copper supplements, there was a huge improvement in herd health.”

Overall, Matt says the cost of accredited fertility testing is more than worthwhile in his operation.

“Our core breeding herd is focused on fertility, so it’s valuable to identify those animals that have superior genetics in terms of their ability to go in calf,” he says.

Matt’s vet, Dr Anna Gates, has been a passionate believer in accredited fertility testing since she graduated, using it from the start of her veterinary career and making ACV accreditation mandatory for all vets working in her Goondiwindi practice.

“It’s hard to make money in beef, and accredited fertility testing is one of the few times, as a vet, that you can help your clients make management decisions that directly improve profitability,” she says.

“A female that’s not pregnant is wasting your money. Carrying out accurate testing at certain times of the year means cattle producers have the choice to sell off dry animals and either buy in new cattle or lower the pressure on their pastures.

“We run an agronomy service where we provide a year round management plan, with **PREgCHECK™**

and **BULLCHECK™** locked in twice a year. Part of that service is that clients can call us anytime with questions and issues – we don’t charge for those calls.

“We see ourselves as part of the local industry, where we all have the same aims – to produce the best beef we can, profitably and sustainably. I can tell you – having an accredited fertility vet on hand can make all the difference.”

PREgCHECK™ and BULLCHECK™

PREgCHECK™ – Professional Reproductive Examination is the flagship accredited cattle reproduction scheme run by accredited members of Australian Cattle Veterinarians (ACV). It is a nationally recognised pregnancy diagnosis and tail tagging system for the identification and certification of cattle pregnancy status, particularly for sale purposes. Australian Cattle Veterinarians have registered the **PREgCHECK™** (NCPD) scheme and the tail tags with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). The three most common tags are red indicating over four months pregnant, blue indicating under four months and green indicating not detectably pregnant. Each tag bears a serial number and a veterinarian identification code.

BULLCHECK™ - Professional Reproductive Examination is a standardised bull breeding soundness evaluation using prescribed assessments and summarises the result into five fertility components. If a bull meets all the minimum standards at all levels of the **BULLCHECK™**, it has a high probability of being fertile

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