

University of Pretoria veterinary reproduction specialists help Brahman bull get back his role in the herd

Posted on August 16, 2022



The 4-year-old red Brahman bull after surgery.

Whether on a large commercial or small-scale farm, the beef bull has a single role: to ensure that his cow herd falls pregnant as soon as possible during the breeding season, in order to maximise production and farming profit. This requires that the bull be a healthy animal, which includes reproductive health and fully functional reproductive organs. Injuries or disease affecting the genital system are therefore of particular importance in these animals.

Recently, a 4-year-old red Brahman bull, who had previously had surgery performed elsewhere to treat a preputial injury, was presented to the Reproduction Clinic of the [Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital \(OVAH\)](#) at the University of Pretoria's [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#). The Clinic is staffed by veterinary clinicians with specialist qualifications and expertise to diagnose and treat genital conditions in bulls.

Dr Geoff Brown, senior lecturer and experienced veterinary reproduction specialist in the Reproduction section of the [Department of Production Animal Studies](#), examined the bull and found that severe post-operative scarring had formed, which prevented the bull from mating naturally.

“Traumatic injury to the prepuce or penile sheath is a condition more commonly seen in Brahman and Brahman-cross animals, due partially to the pendulous sheath conformation of these and other *Bos indicus* cattle,” said Dr Brown. “Damage to this tissue can prevent penile protrusion and a failure to achieve erection. This has a direct impact on the bull fulfilling his primary role of impregnating cows and, if not rapidly diagnosed and correctly treated, could lead to major loss on the side of the farmer,” he added.



An examination of the bull by veterinary reproduction specialist Dr Geoff Brown found that severe post-operative scarring had formed, which prevented the bull from mating naturally.

More importantly, he said, beef production plays an important role in food security, by ensuring that a population has, at all times, both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet dietary needs for a productive and healthy life.

Dr Brown explained that neglect or improper management of such cases can result in scar tissue formation within the sheath, which could worsen the condition. Treatment of these cases frequently requires surgical intervention under general anaesthesia, and preferably in a theatre, he said.

“In general, bulls are challenging to treat because of the associated risks in handling them. For these reasons, and to ensure successful recovery with a return to normal function, it is best performed as a procedure at a referral centre such as the OVAH,” said Dr Brown.



The condition had a direct impact on the bull fulfilling his primary role of impregnating cows.

In theatre, under general anaesthesia, Dr Brown surgically removed the extensive band of scar tissue and reattached the remaining healthy portions of the penile sheath. After recovering from anaesthesia the bull underwent daily intensive treatment at the Veterinary Academic Hospital for approximately three weeks following the surgery.

Initial indications are that the surgery was successful, however the real test will be to see if he is able to successfully serve his cow herd.

Published by Hlengiwe Mnguni