

# Heat Detection Best Practice



This 'best practice' report is to help ensure effective heat detection is carried out on farm, and to understand reasons heat activity and detection may be below target. Observation of standing to be mounted indicates the mounted cow is definitely in oestrus and AI timing will be correct.

## When and how to detect bulling activity?

- Bulling activity is intermittent and therefore **a period of prolonged observation** is more likely to detect activity than a casual glance.
- Cows will not show signs when there are other activities going on, such as milking and feeding.
- Up to 70% of heats occur between 6pm and 6am
- Half of cows bull for 6-12 hours, but a quarter of cows will bull for less than 6 hours.

**Dedicated heat observation sessions should be a routine of 20-30 minutes 3-4 times daily spread throughout the day. It is particularly important to ensure time is dedicated in the evening.**

## Focus heat detection

Not all cows will show standing heat and so cow fertility history is helpful. This means:

- Know which cows are likely to come bulling. This information is available on INTERHERD action lists, the Bray board, or you can use a diary.
- Have a note book to hand so you can **record cows** that are active at the time
- Good clear **cow identification** is essential.
- Involve **all staff** in heat detection to maximise resources.
- Ensure **communication** between staff to focus on animals likely to be bulling.

## Heat detection skills

The most important aspect is to ensure

- high skill levels of staff
- time is both available and committed to heat detection.

We can provide training in heat detection to improve knowledge and skills.

### What can I do to maximise my heat detection?

You will not see all bulling animals. Heat detection aids minimise the number of missed heats. The approach will differ between farms.

Heat Detection Aid	Advantages
Routine vet visits	Determines cows are cycling. Treated cows likely to come bulling at the same time resulting in stronger bulling signs and focussing attention at particular times.
Estrus Alert Kamars	Cheap at less than £1 per cow. Leaves positive mark on bulling cows.
Tail paint	Very cheap. Directs attention to cows likely to come on/needing attention.
Stock bull present near collecting yard	Bulling cows likely to stand near bull at milking time.
Vasectomised bull with chin ball marker	Present all the time. Focus for bulling activity. Marks cows served. Relatively low cost
Pedometers	Proven technology. High rate of detecting heats

### Influences on heat detection

There are times when bulling activity are reduced. This may be due to:

- Cows in a negative energy balance. Normal hormone cycles are likely to be disrupted.
- A high incidence of lameness, such as due to digital dermatitis
- Low numbers of cows in oestrus. This reduces the amount of activity.
- Concrete can be too smooth and inhibit bulling activity.
- A lack of room for cows bulling will inhibit bulling activity.
- Diet and management changes will influence bulling activity.
- Very cold or hot weather will reduce bulling activity.

### Monitoring Heat Detection

We can help you to monitor and manage heat detection. Setting targets and monitoring performance are important to achieve good fertility performance.

If you are concerned about the level of bulling activity, or the accuracy of heat detection, we can investigate these areas.