Fertility can be up to 10 times more important than price (per head) for profitability. We often emphasize selecting for female fertility but don't apply the same rigour to bulls. When buying bulls, look for those backed by BULLCHECK™ to ensure they meet minimum fertility standards. BULLCHECK™ certifies comprehensive fertility testing conducted by a vet, accredited with Australian Cattle Veterinarians, including examination for structural soundness & reproductive organs, measurement of scrotal circumference & tested for both SEMEN MOTILITY & SEMEN MORPHOLOGY. That is, go the FULL MONTY!!!

SEMEN MOTILITY:- Sperm cells need to be motile. At about 60um long, they've a way to travel to get the job done. Following collection of a semen sample, a drop is placed on a microscope slide & examined, 'crush side', to assess the percentage of sperm cells moving forward. A guide for minimum Semen Motility is >30% progressively motile sperm. All bulls catalogued for our 2017 Eastern Plains Angus Bull Sale exhibited ≥50% progressively motile sperm in their semen sample.

SEMEN MORPHOLOGY:- Morphology is the anatomy or structure of the sperm. It cannot be tested 'crush side', requiring a large & specialised laboratory microscope to examine a preserved semen sample, assessing the % normal & % abnormal sperm cells. It can pick up defects in the sperm that 'crush side' testing cannot. The most serious of these defects can see the sperm start to fertilise an egg but fail to result in a viable embryo & the female will fail to fall in calf. Whilst bulls with poor morphology may still sire calves, it comes at the added cost of a high rate of PTNIC females & the loss of 1 or 2 embryos during the mating season prior to maintaining pregnancy. The delay in achieving pregnancy can result in smaller calves at weaning & means a shorter recovery time post calving, putting undue pressure on the female to achieve pregnancy the following year. Thus using bulls with high normal sperm morphology counts can increase calving rates, shorten calving periods, reduce PTNIC & increase weaning weights. Age at puberty & time between calving and cycling again, can also be influenced by the morphology of the heifer’s sire.

Note that Semen Morphology can differ in subsequent samples from the same bull. Stress can cause this & putting a bull through a sale will generally cause some stress. But, if the % normal sperm is high, that bull has a 'buffer' to withstand more of a drop in the % normal sperm, than a bull that (inhernently or genetically) produces lower % normal sperm. A threshold guide for minimum Semen Morphology is:-

(a) >70% normal sperm for bulls used in single sire matings or AI

(b) >50% normal sperm for bulls used in multiple sire matings.

All bulls catalogued for our 2017 Eastern Plains Angus Bull Sale exhibited ≥70% normal sperm in their semen sample.