

Top tips for Custodians



**Farm
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What is the Crofting Cattle Improvement Scheme?

The Crofting Cattle Improvement Scheme, often referred to as the 'commission bull hire scheme' is open to groups of at least two crofters within the crofting areas, providing high health bulls in areas where ownership and commercial hiring are uneconomic.

The Scottish Government Bull Stud in Inverness houses and manages the bulls that support the scheme.

The benefits of co-operating with neighbours through this scheme include:

- **Reduced cost per cow served**
- **High Health bulls are provided**
- **Reduced risk, as the bull stud will provide a replacement if the bull has an accident or stops working**

A custodian needs to be appointed to look after the bull and this guide is full of tips for experienced custodians or those thinking of becoming one.

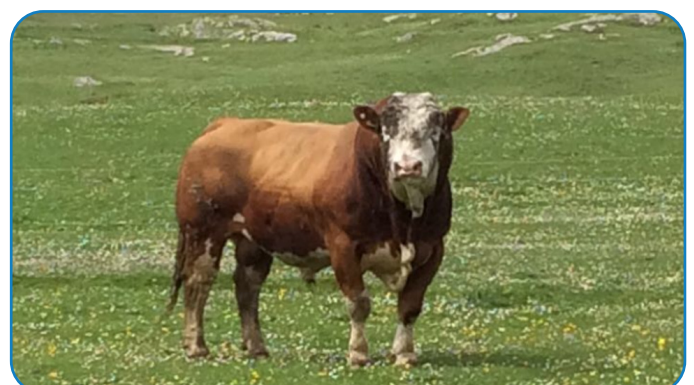
Key Attributes of a Custodian

- Competent at handling bulls and livestock and be able to halter them
- Be under 70 years old
- Be available to be present at times of bull delivery and collection
- Be able to complete online movements with BCMS or replacement system. Therefore it is useful if custodian is a cattle keeper
- Able to work with other cattle keepers so early warning given if cows returning to the bull etc
- Responsible person who will monitor bull and call vet and liase with farm manager if any problems

Mentoring for next generation Custodians

If your township wants to develop the next generation of custodians have you thought of using the FAS mentoring scheme?

Mentees can get up to 4 days of support from an experienced custodian <https://www.fas.scot/application-forms/mentoring-support-form/>



Monitor Bull Condition

It is important that you monitor the body condition of your bull. If the bull is becoming too thin you may need to provide extra feeding. Always communicate any concerns with the Stud Farm Manager.

Accidents will happen!

The bulls are often working in difficult ground conditions. Therefore it is important they are monitored daily.

If you notice the bull is ill then

- Call the vet and the Bull Stud Farm Manager immediately
- Vet fees should be charged to SG bull stud account with the local vet
- Keep the bull stud manager informed of illness and treatments
- A replacement bull may need to be supplied

If the bull dies

- Communicate with the Bull stud Farm Manager
- Obtain a death certificate from the vet
- Arrange disposal of the carcass
- A replacement bull may need to be supplied

If the bull gets bogged

- The first priority is bull welfare so see if he can be removed from the bog, or in the worst post case scenario, arrange for the bull to be put down.
- Keep the farm manager aware of situation – it is useful if pictures can be sent.

Common Problems and some Options

Q. Some cattle keepers want a native bull and others want a continental bull but we don't have enough cows to justify two.

A. Speak to the farm manager – could you collaborate with a near by township and share the bulls or could you choose to get different breeds on different years?

Q. How do we share out the bull hire cost?

A. The grazings clerk should have an agreed payment structure before the bull arrives. These vary, either all shareholders are levied or in some townships the bill is split per number of cows to the bull.

Q. Some cattle keepers are in CheCS accredited health schemes – what impact does this have?

A. If cattle are mixing then all herds should strive to have the same health status and collaborate to be in the same scheme. All bull hire scheme bulls are tested for a number of diseases so will not pose a health risk but your fellow graziers cattle could. As long as guidance is followed you can still get a CHeCS health scheme status for BVD, Johne's disease and Neospora – seek advice from your vet.

Q. What about insurance?

A. The group should decide if they want to take out insurance cover for personal accidents. The scheme arranges public liability cover of £2,000,000 and also minimal cover for the custodians.

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