

# Commingling Herd Bulls



**ELDON COLE**

## **MT. VERNON, MO.**

I had a producer cull recently and he wanted to know how to put his herd bulls together when he removed them from the cow herd without a lot of fighting and possible injury. I told him a few practical ideas I'd heard

over the years.

One of the unusual ideas involved putting some oil of anise (licorice) on them when you put them together. Well, as we in extension try to do, I remembered some research from Auburn back in the 80's that sort-of validated this practice. I shared it with the caller.

The Auburn researchers were interested in whether cattle recognized one another via sight

or smell. I believe the test herd was Holstein and was cows instead of bulls. Anyway, they spray-painted the dominant cows front half of their bodies with a black or white water-based paint. Some were sprayed with anise oil. Then they were put back together to see if the herd's normal hierarchy (peck order) was upset.

The painted cows were accepted back in the herd with no social upheaval according to the report. However, the anise oil sprayed cows did not try to interact with others or exert their dominance. They typically retreated to a corner of the holding area and laid down. What do you use to keep fighting to a minimum when you put your bulls together? Let me know if you have a good home remedy. Δ

*Eldon Cole is Extension Livestock Specialist with the University of Missouri at Mt. Vernon, Mo.*