

New disease challenge: winter pinkeye

By LORETTA SORENSEN

MORE and more pinkeye infections are plaguing livestock in winter, and veterinarians say it's not the classic pinkeye that's been around for years.

Longtime vet Dave Barz at Northwest Veterinary Supply in Parkston, S.D., explains there is a significant difference between the summer and winter infections.

"We were taught that *Moraxella bovis* caused pinkeye," Barz says. "However, we're culturing many of the eyes we treat, and in 75% of them we're finding *Moraxella bovoculi*, a different strain of bacteria. It's possible the vaccine for *M. bovis* has decreased the population of that bacteria in the environment, leaving more room for *M. bovoculi* to increase."

To complicate things a bit further, reddened, tearing eyes in winter can signal the presence of infectious bovine rhinotracheitis, or IBR. This viral disease has a limited life span of 10 to 20 days and requires no treatment. However, IBR can lower the immune defense mechanism, making cattle more susceptible to *M. bovoculi*.

"IBR causes reddening and tearing at the outside of the eye," Barz says. "With pinkeye, you see a white, pinpoint lesion at the center of the eye that spreads to the outside."

"IBR doesn't require treatment. To make sure it's not pinkeye, you have to

culture the bacteria. If in doubt, you should treat the animal."

Reducing the chances for either pinkeye or *M. bovoculi* infections can be accomplished with fly control, vaccination and managing grazing environments to eliminate major causes of eye irritations.

"In the pasture, it could be weed pollen or even brome pollen that causes cattle eyes to tear," Barz says. "That makes the animal's face wet, which then attracts flies, which are the mechanical vectors that can carry the *Moraxella* organism for miles during summer."

Avoiding tall grass during pollination helps reduce eye tearing. Consistent and effective fly control also helps reduce the presence of the bacteria.

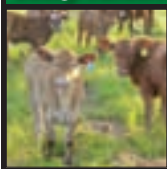
"Even though flies will be on cattle with fly tags, the tags still help reduce fly populations and decrease stress on cattle," Barz

says. "We also recommend finding an appropriate vaccine that works in your herd."

He says more veterinarians are developing vaccines that provide the best immunity for individual herds. Injections can be administered at turnout and again in late summer, if necessary. A booster of pinkeye vaccine at weaning will help calves in the feedlot.

White-faced cattle are more susceptible to pinkeye infections because the color of their face reflects sunlight into their eyes, increasing eye irritation.

Stockers and Backgrounders



EYE PATCH: Put snow on the ground, and this cow's eye patch would look unusual. Not so if the incidence of winter pinkeye keeps growing, say veterinarians.

"That's not to say that darker colored cattle can't get pinkeye," Barz says. "The disease isn't limited to just white-faced animals."

Barz is also seeing more incidence of clostridial disease. Clostridial organisms are, for the most part, normal flora of cattle. They become problematic when cattle are subjected to stress.

Unfortunately, the first sign of a clostridial disease may be death. Vaccines are

key to controlling those diseases.

Mycoplasma pneumonia was rare in the U.S. until the summer of 2000, when a rapidly spreading occurrence of the disease caused it to become a widespread and now growing problem.

"Culturing is critical to positively identify a disease," Barz says.

He adds that vaccines don't eliminate disease problems, but they minimize them. *Sorensen writes from Yankton, S.D.*

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