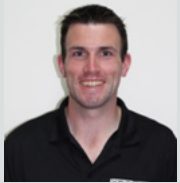


Sheep & Beef Talk

March 2020



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Veterinarian

Pink Eye in Cattle

Pinkeye is a highly infectious eye disease and can cause an outbreak in your herd very quickly, but it is preventable with the right vaccination.

Pink eye is a painful and highly infectious eye disease which leads to temporary blindness in many animals (one or both eyes) and can lead to permanent blindness in some animals (1-2%). It is primarily caused by infection with the bacteria, *Moraxella bovis* (not to be confused with *Mycoplasma bovis*!).

The danger period is late spring and summer. During these seasons, environmental risks such as, UV light, wind, dust, flies and stalky/seedy vegetation combine with management risks such as high stocking rates, buying cattle and yarding cattle, to set the scene for an outbreak of pink eye.

Cattle of all ages, sexes and types can suffer from

pink eye, but young cattle are particularly vulnerable. Previously infected cattle can become carriers and spread the disease within a herd.

The first signs of pink eye will be weepy eyes, excessive blinking, and an avoidance of strong light. As the disease progresses, the eye becomes inflamed (pink) and cloudy which starts in the centre of the eye and spreads outwards. The centre of the eye becomes more yellow as the infection spreads. Severe cases can end up with a perforated eye and permanent blindness. Healing results in a white scar on the cornea which can affect vision.

Pink eye is an animal welfare issue causing prolonged and serious pain. It also imposes

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Reminders for March

- Keep an eye on our monitor farm spore count results at www.vetent.co.nz
- Order Toxovax and Campyvax for hoggets if not already done.
- Check your drench is working – collect 10 samples 10 days after drenching.
- Plan pre-tup animal health treatments to avoid yarding ewes close to tupping.
- Give the ram team a spruce up before tupping – drench, dip, zinc capsule, trim feet.
- Book in cattle pregnancy scanning for 6-8 weeks after the bulls come out.

Pink Eye in Cattle (continued)

significant economic and production losses through:

- Depressed growth rates
- Loss or culling because of eye rupture and permanent blindness
- Disruption to seasonal grazing management
- Veterinary and labour costs to treat infected animals
- Lowered sale value of animals with eye lesions
- Prolonged healing time (60 days) and spread through a mob

Pink eye can be prevented by vaccination with Piliguard

Pinkeye-1 Trivalent. It is most effective if given 2-3 weeks prior to the pink eye season. It is less effective in the face of a herd outbreak. Only a single shot is required, but this means vaccine site reactions are more common than with other vaccines. An annual booster is recommended.

Quick action is required to prevent the spread of pinkeye. We strongly recommend a vet visit in all cases of suspected pink eye. Affected animals should be removed from the mob for treatment and separate grazing. Swabs from cattle may be taken to identify the

cause of infection.

When treating, always treat both eyes, starting with the good eye. Topical and systemic antibiotic treatments can be used such as:

Topical treatments

- Orbenin eye ointment, repeat every 2 days.
- An antibiotic spray, repeat 2-3 times per day (can be provided by your vet).

Systemic treatments

- Antibiotic injection into the subconjunctiva (veterinary procedure).
- Long-acting tetracyclines (e.g. Bivatox/Oxytetrin/Alamycin) given under the skin or into muscle depending on product used.

Surgical treatments are required in severe cases. A third eyelid flap or sewing the eyelids together can be done to save the eye.

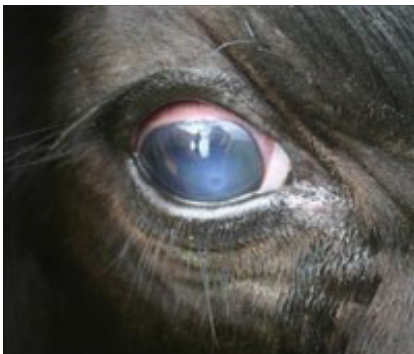


Figure 1. Early Pinkeye



Figure 2. Late Pinkeye

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