

MAY 2002 - LARGE ANIMAL NEWS

PINKEYE ALERT! Spring is here, flies are becoming active, and pinkeye is beginning to appear. In preparation we **recommend at least a single dose of pinkeye vaccine to populations of cattle (adults and youngstock) at risk for pinkeye.** Our practice has been using Pinkeye Shield® from Grand Labs. This vaccine incorporates 4 strains of pinkeye bacteria for broad protection. We formerly used other brands of vaccine with first one, then two, then three strains of pinkeye bacteria in them. Those vaccine brands worked well in their time. However the bug continues to change through mutation. Now we're up to a 4 strain vaccine for best effectiveness. Be sure to check on that detail when purchasing pinkeye vaccine.

Some areas of our practice seem to have higher than usual levels of pinkeye. In those areas we recommended a 2-4 week booster dose of the vaccine. It seems the Chili and Lynn areas in particular have a very aggressive form of the pinkeye bacteria requiring a higher level of protection. Remember that we see cases of pinkeye all summer into fall. Observation for signs of pinkeye cannot stop after August. September often can be our worst month for pinkeye.

An alternative to pinkeye vaccination would be attempting good fly control. Flies are the main mode of pinkeye spread between animals. In the past insecticide ear tags (one placed in each ear) were popular for heifers. Unfortunately the cost of those is much higher than vaccinating. Additionally, those tags should be removed after 4 months; tag effectiveness is gone by that time. All that remains is a low, ineffective insecticide level leading to insecticide resistance for the flies.

A more effective insecticide alternative is using appropriately placed insecticide applicators. These applicators use a liquid product meant to rub on the face and back of cattle as they walk under the applicator. These applicators should be placed in lanes where the cattle have to pass through on a regular basis. Parlor herds have the advantage in this respect. Oilers placed in the return lane will provide excellent fly control and lice pest control. That fly control provided by insecticide oilers will also minimize the spread of pinkeye by controlling those disease carrying flies.

Pour-on fly repellants are also available for use in heifers and cows. These products seem to be effective for two weeks. They are convenient and easy to use in calves and heifers, or for cows in confinement situations. Our practice carries the product Ultraboss®.

Finally, a good way to control flies is through sanitation. Flies are always looking for places to breed and lay eggs. Manure and mud are what they require. The more effort you put into sanitation, the better the general health of your animals will be, much further than just simply pinkeye control. For example, a common problem on farms is mastitis in fresh heifers. What many people don't know is that a common time for heifers to get infected with mastitis bacteria is when they are 6-10 months old. Heifers are going through puberty at that age, a very sensitive time for their 'udder'. It has been proven that the #1 cause of *Staph aureus mastitis in fresh heifers is directly related to sanitation and fly control for heifers at puberty.* So you see, keeping them as clean as practical has more than one benefit; mastitis control, pinkeye control, good general health and growth promotion.

Good luck this spring! If you have any questions regarding pinkeye control or other dairy issues please give us a call.

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