

Vet Call

Stay in The Money with Pinkeye Management

PINKEYE. The simple name can't fool beef producers. Eating up more than \$150 million each year in decreased weight gains, drops in milk production, reduced sale prices and treatment costs, infectious bovine keratoconjunctivitis (IBK or pinkeye) poses a serious threat to cow-calf operations.

When all economic factors associated with pinkeye are considered, the impact of the disease is enormous. In fact, it can cut \$5 to \$7 per hundred weight from the value of marketed cattle, says Van Ricketts, DVM, Pfizer technical services. When blindness occurs, the costs can be even greater.

Caused by the *Moraxella bovis* bacterium, pinkeye is a highly contagious disease. When one or two calves come down with red or watery eyes, most of the herd can become infected with pinkeye in a few short days. Young calves are particularly susceptible to the organism, picking it up through direct contact of eyes, faces and nasal secretions, as well as direct contact with inanimate objects such as feed bunks and squeeze chutes that may be

contaminated with the organism.

Although pinkeye may be contracted under any conditions, susceptibility is greater if there is excessive dust, tall and dry weeds and high numbers of face flies. A good herd health program should include fly control and pasture management.

Fly tags, spraying of insecticides, and insecticide-impregnated dust bags are effective in controlling fly populations, but must be monitored frequently for resistance. In areas where cattle are heavily concentrated, breaking up fecal pads will help to minimize the growth of face fly larvae.

Allergic reactions to pollen often initiate the start of pinkeye. Proper pasture management, including frequent clipping to remove seed pods that continually brush cattle's faces and irritate eyes, will help to keep down hazards.

To keep incoming cattle from infecting a herd, an inspection/treatment protocol should be developed and followed for the new cattle. Some harbor the bacteria but don't show signs of the disease which can cause unsuspected spread within a herd.

While employing solid management techniques may help reduce the opportunities for pinkeye to find its way into a herd, severe outbreaks can still occur.

Traditional treatments, such as antibiotics injected directly into the eyelid, topical powders and suture patches, are labor-intensive and provide only short-term protection. Vaccines, another option, must be administered before pinkeye outbreaks occur and often require boosters to last throughout the fly season.

Ricketts recommends treating with the only injectable antibiotic approved for pinkeye Liquamycin LA-200. With a single intramuscular injection of Liquamycin LA-200 into the hindquarter, the antibiotic delivers three days of therapy. "Treatment with this long-lasting injectable is convenient, requiring less handling of the infected animal," Ricketts says.

By carefully controlling environmental conditions, monitoring cattle frequently and treating at the first signs of infection, producers can stay "in the money" while keeping cattle "out of the pink."

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