



A Guide to Health Problems of CATTLE

Cattle make wonderful pets on a lifestyle block but need routine health care to keep them in good condition.

CATTLE HEALTH PROBLEMS

Here are some of the most common health problems we encounter in cattle:

GASTROINTESTINAL PARASITES

Worms like *Ostertagia*, *Trichostrongylus* and *Cooperia* are common causes of disease in cattle, especially young stock and pregnant animals.

The worms compete for nutrition with their host and can cause weight loss, scouring, oedema in the jaw and brisket and dehydration. In severe cases this can lead to death.

Diagnosis is based on clinical signs and a faecal egg count (FEC).

Treatment is based around an effective broad spectrum drench as well as symptomatic treatment like fluid therapy and providing good quality feed.

There are pour-on and oral drenches available and a new intra-ruminal bolus that provides up to 24 weeks protection for growing cattle.

Prevention is based on regular drenching and faecal egg counts (FEC), especially of young animals, and good grazing management techniques such as:

- cross-grazing different species like sheep with cattle and horses
- quarantine-drenching stock on arrival and testing for worm eggs 10 days later before releasing them onto the farm
- accurate dosing according to weight - under-dosing encourages resistance, over-dosing can cause drench toxicity.

FACIAL ECZEMA

Facial Eczema (FE) is a disease caused by a toxin called sporidesmin, produced by a fungus in ryegrass pastures. It thrives in moist, warm and humid conditions and is often a problem in summer and autumn.

When ingested the toxin damages the liver, causing a build-up of other toxins like chlorophyll in the body. Chlorophyll reacts with UV light in the skin and causes the sunburn like signs often seen in unprotected cattle.

Sub-clinical signs include a drop in milk production, weight loss, increased empty rates and sudden death at calving.

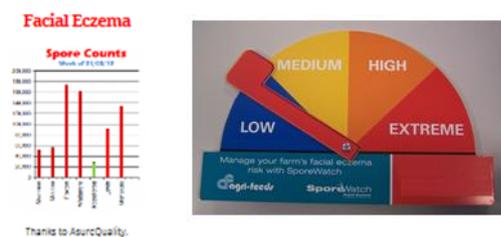
It is an extremely painful condition and affected



Cow with severe Facial Eczema

animals need to be seen by the vet, to provide treatment or even euthanasia for severely affected animals. The liver damage is often irreversible, but supportive treatment can include pain relief, antihistamines and vitamins. Providing shade and moving animals to a different pasture (hay or long grass) is essential to stop progression of the disease.

Prevention starts with monitoring of pasture spore counts to indicate when FE season is likely to start. This information is available at the vet clinic and posted onto our website lhvc.co.nz. Spore counts can be carried out on your own property as well.



The best protection for your cattle is provided by slow release intra-ruminal zinc boluses. This will protect your cattle for 5 weeks after which another bolus can be given if spore counts are still high.

CLOSTRIDIAL DISEASES

Clostridial bacteria are the cause of a group of deadly diseases in sheep and goats. These include Tetanus, Blackleg, Pulpy Kidney/enterotoxaemia, Gas Gangrene, Black Disease and Sudden Death Syndrome.

The bacteria live in the ground and can enter the animal through a wound, causing a sudden rapidly deteriorating condition with high mortality rates.

They are usually not curable once the disease has taken hold of your animal, therefore prevention is essential.

A vaccine can be given to protect your calves from as young as 6 weeks old. A booster shot is needed 4 weeks later followed by annual boosters.

Pregnant cows should be vaccinated 4 weeks before birth, so they produce enough maternal antibodies in the colostrum to protect the

offspring until they are old enough to receive their first vaccination.

A combined vaccine with protection for Leptospirosis is available for cattle.

LEPTOSPIROSIS

Lepto is the world's most wide spread zoonotic disease caused by bacteria called Leptospire. This means it can pass from animals to people. It causes flu-like symptoms, liver and kidney damage and in severe cases intensive care is required, and death in humans and animals may occur.

Leptospire are shed in the urine of affected animals which often show no clinical signs of disease. Humans are infected through contact with diseased urine from cattle, pigs, deer and sheep as well as rats, mice and hedgehogs, so protective clothing should be worn when handling stock and materials that could have been exposed to rodents.

Vaccination of pigs and cattle is important to prevent the spread of Leptosirois.

Contact Levin and Horowhenua Vets for more information and to organise vaccination for your stock.

HORN INJURIES - DEHORNING

Cattle with horns can often cause wounds and bruises on other cows that may become infected, and can be dangerous to people as well.

Dehorning can be carried out on calves and adult cows and bulls. As horns have many nerves and blood vessels, dehorning needs to be done with the appropriate pain relief and control of haemorrhage.

Calves should be disbudded before 6 weeks of age to minimise bleeding and chances of the horn re-growing and can be done under deep sedation with local anaesthesia to ensure maximum pain relief.

Animals should be disbudded in preference to being dehorned.