

Description:

Pinkeye is a painful and damaging infectious disease in one or both eyes of cattle. If left untreated, pinkeye can lead to blindness in the infected eye(s). Pinkeye in cattle is also called Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (IBK).

Clinical Signs:

Excess watering and tears occur in the infected eye. Partial closure of the eyelid (squinting) due to the pain of the infection also occurs. The cornea (surface of the eyeball) develops a sore or ulcer in the middle of it, usually seen as a white spot ¼ inch in diameter where it normally should be clear.

Causes:

The most common cause (90%) of pinkeye in cattle is the bacteria, Moraxella bovis. There are different strains of this bacteria that produce exotoxins which destroy the cornea of the eye. Another bacteria, Neisseria spp., may also cause pinkeye. A common virus of cattle, Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR), can also cause pinkeye lesions.

Cattle Affected:

Pinkeye affects all ages of cattle, but younger cattle (<2 yrs) are more susceptible. Pinkeye is most common in cattle on pasture, during the summer months, especially during the fly season. Most all summer pinkeye in cattle on pasture is caused by the Moraxella bovis bacteria.

Contributing factors:

Flies, especially face flies which spread the bacteria; sunlight (ultraviolet light); and eye irritants such as weeds, thistles, etc. are factors that contribute to pinkeye in cattle.

Treatment:

Injectable antibiotics are indicated, such as long-acting oxytetracycline (LA200®) in beef cattle or an appropriate antibiotic in dairy animals. Topical antibiotics and/or sub-conjunctival injections of appropriate antibiotics can also be applied if infected cattle can be properly restrained. An eye patch can also be used to cover the infected eye.

Control:

Several commercial vaccines are available (see below). Fly control is important, such as: insecticide ear tags, insecticide sprays or backrubs, larval control feed additives, etc. Shade will decrease exposure to sunlight and clipping weeds on pasture will reduce the risk of eye irritation.

Vaccines:

Pinkeye vaccines are bacterins which contain one or several killed strains of Moraxella bovis. It is recommended to give one injection in accordance with label instructions, 3-6 weeks prior to onset of the pinkeye season and to re-boost annually. Some of the commercially available Pinkeye vaccines include: *Pinkeye Shield XT4* from Novartis; *20/20 Vision 7* from Intervet; *Alpha 7/MB* from Boehringer Ingelheim; *Piliguard Pinkeye* from Schering Plough; *TrustGuard MB* from Vedco; and *Pinkeye-3* from Aspen.