

April 2023 North Coast

Animal health seasonal update

Buffalo fly and three day sickness

Since the start of the year, we have seen the usual north coast animal health challenges such as buffalo fly and three-day sickness.

Three day sickness started a little later this year, possibly associated with the drier start to our traditional wet summers. There were widespread reports of less than satisfactory control of buffalo fly using synthetic pyrethroid (SP) ear tags indicating SP resistance in the buffalo fly population. Other options include organophosphate (OP) or macrocyclic lactone (ML) tags. A pre-registration limited release of a new SP/ML combination tag was available this season which, according to anecdotal reports, has given better control than either of these chemical groups used alone.

As the weather has now cooled, we have seen a drop in buffalo fly numbers and three day sickness cases.

Cattle ticks and tick fever

Cattle ticks remain a headache for northern producers with many on-going and new detections over this past summer and autumn period. We have also had five tick fever (red water) outbreaks in the Kyogle, Byron and Tweed council areas.

Some of these outbreaks have had significant stock losses, with over 20 head that died in one outbreak alone. Cattle ticks are usually introduced via stock, either from infested neighbouring properties (eg strays) or introduced from infested properties further

away (either NSW or Qld) where cattle have not been inspected or appropriately treated prior to movement.

It is important to remember to follow the policies on introducing stock from possible tick-infested properties/regions including having them inspected and appropriately treated before they arrive at your property to avoid putting yourself (and your neighbours) at risk of stock losses or being quarantined. And, as always, quarantine new stock in a suitable paddock where they can be regularly monitored (for ticks and any other disease) – you may spot ticks yourself and be able to get onto it quicker before they spread all over your property.

Remember, cattle ticks and tick fever are notifiable diseases in NSW so alert your LLS District Vet or DPI tick officers about any suspected outbreaks.

Nutrition – pastures, die-back and winter feed gap

Whilst feed has been more plentiful and nutritious over the summer in many areas, some areas have had increasing issues with pasture dieback leading to losses of tropical grasses and subsequent significant growth of broadleaf weed species.

Some areas that were significantly flood impacted last year are still struggling with pasture quality. For many cattle producers, these two impacts on pasture have meant reduced stock numbers and going into winter with limited feed. Even if you haven't been affected in these ways, winter is just around the

corner and with it a decline in grass quantity and quality so it is important to have a plan in place NOW as to how you will deal with this winter feed gap.

Do you sell or agist animals elsewhere to avoid having animals go backwards or the added expense of supplementing? Do you buy in feed (beware of quality and expense)? Do you plant winter forage? Think about your options NOW and start putting steps in place before it's too late. Contact LLS if you need more information.

Parasite control

Worms

Young stock may get hammered by internal parasites such as worms and fluke as they struggle adjusting to the world away from mum, and especially as the feed quality through winter may be less than ideal.

Give young stock a drench at weaning to get rid of those worms which take advantage of your stressed weaners, and then monitor worm egg counts to determine when they might need another drench rather than just reaching for the drench gun every month or so. This will save you money and, more importantly, delay the emergence of resistance to those drench chemicals that we so rely upon.

There are many reports of resistance to current drenches. *Cooperia* (small intestinal scour worm) in particular is resistant to most macrocyclic lactone (ML) drenches now. *Haemonchus* (barber's pole worm) resistance is present to many of these drenches too, probably because they are so convenient to use (inject or pour on) so we have relied upon them too heavily in the past. However, the good news is, these worms are susceptible to the old style oral white and clear drenches. We don't want to overdo it with these either, otherwise resistance may emerge to these too.

The current thinking, following the sheep industry, is to use a combination approach to get a greater kill rate to slow down the emergence of resistance. There are some great new combination products on the market which combine an ML with levamisole in an easy to

apply pour on or injectable product; or you can use an ML product of your choice and give an oral white or clear drench at the same time.

Regarding adult cows, they tend to be far more resistant to worms than younger animals, so generally don't need routine drenching. However, some may occasionally suffer from *Ostertagia* (brown stomach worm) following a stressor (eg poor nutrition) and then start to lose weight or scour. Treating affected cows and herd mates under similar conditions may be required occasionally.

Liver Fluke

Many people religiously treat their stock for liver fluke when they may not need to and some don't treat when they should. Unlike worms, fluke can also affect adult cattle. If you do not know if liver fluke is a problem on your property, contact a private or district vet to arrange to get a blood test done to see if it is present. If it's not, then you have just saved yourself a tidy sum of money on a fluke drench that you didn't need.

Fluke should be treated in the two months beginning with A - April and August. In April, there may be juvenile fluke in the system that haven't yet matured, so a drench which kills these immature stages should be used, such as one containing Triclabendazole or Nitroxylin. In August, there should only be adult fluke present so a drench that just kills adults, such as Clorsulon (many products) or Oxytocyanide (eg Nilzan) should be used so we're not relying on the one drench all the time which may lead to resistance.

For more info on these issues and many more, check out the North Coast Beef Cattle Health and Husbandry book available through the Local Land Services website or hard copies at your local LLS office.

For more information

Contact your nearest Local Land Services office on 1300 795 299 or visit our website www.lls.nsw.gov.au