



Vets Corner July 2010

Jeff Collins, DVM

Mid to late Summer usually always means fly season for cattle producers, and with that means having to deal with pinkeye in calves or even cows. Prevention is key, as affected eyes can easily leave a permanent scar on the cornea, which may impair vision. There are various pinkeye vaccines out there to help prevent the disease, but even more important than that is fly control. Most pinkeye vaccines will need a booster dose the first year they are given, which is usually about 4-6 weeks after the initial dose. So when planning to vaccinate for pinkeye make sure you plan to catch your cattle twice, and plan the first dose at least 2 weeks before your area's worst "fly/pinkeye season." It is also important to consult your local veterinarian regarding which strains of pinkeye are most prevalent in your area, as that will determine which vaccine to use. When it comes to fly control there are basically 2 families of drugs used to repel and kill flies: organophosphates and permethrins. If you use these, it would be wise to rotate one for the other every other year- in order to take care of those flies that are resistant to the other drug. The products available come in various forms: pour-ons, fly tags, or are used in misters and back rubbers. Pour-ons and fly tags are the most effective in keeping flies away from the eyes.

So what if you're getting pinkeye in your herd, regardless of preventative strategies? It could be that the strain of pinkeye you're experiencing was not included in the vaccine you used, and/or your fly control could be ineffective due to resistance or overwhelming weather conditions. Either way, the earlier you can get those eyes treated the greater chance you have of protecting their eyes from being scarred. The best way to determine an active pinkeye infection is whether or not the eye is draining. If the eye is irritated with or without a white-spot and you notice excessive tearing, than there is active infection and it should be treated. If there is no drainage but they have a white spot on their cornea, the infection is likely gone; they are just in the process of repairing the trauma to the eye and no treatment is necessary. The traditional treatment of pinkeye includes a dose of Oxytetracycline (antibiotic), a dose of Vitamin AD, and 1-2 mL of Penicillin directly into the eye (your veterinarian may actually inject the penicillin into the upper lid of the eye). All infected eyes should be patched (unless both eyes are affected- than patch the worst one) with a piece of cloth (denim works best) and contact cement (commonly called sale-barn glue). The patch does 2 things: it protects the affected eye to speed healing, and it also acts as a physical barrier to keep flies from spreading the bacteria to other cattle. Occasionally, animals will need to be retreated in 3-4 days, but most of the time one treatment is sufficient enough. Hopefully you don't have to deal with pinkeye, but if you do- treat those eyes in hopes that when the flies are gone your cattle will be seeing clearly!

If you have any questions or suggestions for future vet's corner articles, please e-mail me directly at: [covet03@yahoo.com](mailto:covet03@yahoo.com) . Any ideas would be helpful.