



# NEWSLETTER

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**Seasonal reminders:**

- Early removal of eye cancers is much easier and more likely to be successful. If you are not sure if an eye problem is cancer or not get the eye checked promptly.
- Bulls should be vaccinated against vibrio and pestivirus at least 2 weeks before you plan to use them. Ear notch test all bulls for BVD when you first acquire the bull



- Calves born to late calving cows get sicker more quickly when the weather is hot. Prompt treatment with electrolytes is essential as calves born in hot weather often do not get adequate colostrum. They also dehydrate a lot more quickly than calves born in cool weather.

**Dispose of batteries carefully**

A recent case of lead poisoning in heifers has highlighted the importance of disposing of batteries thoughtfully.

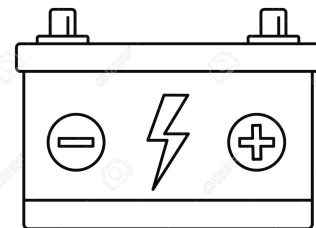
Two heifers out of a mob of 47 died showing neurological symptoms. The heifers were blind and staggering before dying.

In this case the batteries were exposed after a rubbish pile was burnt. It is possible that the batteries had been there for 10 years or more.

All heifers that were in that paddock will need to have their blood lead levels checked to make sure that they are fit for human consumption. One of the issues with lead poisoning is that levels of lead can stay high for years after exposure and these animals can never enter the food chain.

Our experience with lead poisoning is that for every animal that dies there are one or two with high levels of lead in their blood.

The important message is to be very careful giving stock access to paddocks that are rubbish tips or that have been rubbish tips in the past. As well all lead batteries should be recycled and not thrown out.





## Heat Stress

Heat stress in cattle occurs when they are exposed to environmental temperatures greater than 25°C, in combination with high humidity or direct sunlight. If cows are experiencing heat stress, they will actively seek shade and wet areas. Some cows will be agitated and breathe with an open mouth as their core temperature increases. Milk production and feed intake will drop. Animals experiencing heat stress need to be cooled down using fans and/or cold water over the body.

Sick cows and cows that experience milk fever are more vulnerable to heat stress.

Some tips that help prevent cows from experiencing heat stress:

- Provide plenty of water
- Provide plenty of shade (trees or sheds)
- Use water sprinklers and/or fans at milking
- Put cows on the yards under sprinklers during the hottest part of the day
- Adjust milking times to avoid the warmer period of the day- earlier morning and later evening milkings



## Eye cancer in cows

Cancer eye in cattle is a squamous cell carcinoma and is like the more common types of skin cancer in humans.

We see three main types of eye cancer: -

- Cancer of the third eyelid
- Cancer on the eyeball
- Cancer of the top or bottom eyelid



### Cancer of the third eyelid

The third eyelid is a membrane that lies on the nose side of the eye and helps clean the eyeball of dust and other foreign matter.

Third eyelids are either pink or black depending on the breed of cattle. Only pink third eyelids are prone to developing cancer. We very rarely see third eyelid cancers in Jerseys but commonly see it in Holsteins.

While third eyelid cancers are common, they are usually very easy to remove so long as they are treated promptly. If left too long the cancer can become quite extensive and is harder to treat, in some cases it cannot be treated at all.

Abattoir regulations against eye cancers are strict and so in advanced disease the animal may not be allowed through an abattoir, meaning

she will need to be sent to the knackery, losing the carcass value.

It has been suggested that eye cancers grow more quickly in the later stages of pregnancy because the cow's immune system is suppressed, so this is another at risk period where the eyes should be checked often.

### Cancer on the eyeball

Cancer on the eyeball is less common than third eyelid cancer. These cancers usually start on the margin of the white part and dark part of the eyeball and look a little bit like a cauliflower.

## Eye cancer detection

Eye cancers of the left eye seem to be worse on some farms and on other farms the right eye seems to be more severely affected.

Our theory is that on rotary dairies that spin anti-clockwise the right eye is observed twice a day by the cupson person. The left eye is not seen as often, and so eye cancers have progressed further before they are noticed.

The opposite is true for platforms that spin clockwise.

Cows in herringbone dairies may have a similar problem if they only go in one side and that is the side where their eye cancer develops.

So, what is the answer? It may be worthwhile to designate one milking a month to eye cancer detection of the eye that is normally hidden. On anti-clockwise platforms, for example somebody positions him or herself in a position to observe left eyes. This may best be done in the exit race.