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Pinkeye (Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (IBK)) in Cattle

Pinkeye is a common and highly contagious ocular disease that occurs in cattle of all ages. However, it is more commonly seen in calves.

It is caused by several bacteria including *Moraxella bovis*, *Moraxella Bovoculi*, *Moraxella lacunata* and *Moraxella catarrhalis*, which all may naturally live on cattle.

Flies are the main vector for spreading the infection between cattle. Other predisposing factors include:

- Damage to the cornea, mostly due to the effects of UV light, grass seed awns, dust or pollens.
- Unpigmented areas around the eyes.
- Cattle kept in or near wooden yards.

Clinical signs include:

- Closed eye(s).
- Weeping eye(s).
- Discoloration of the cornea- initially white/blue followed by pink.
- Can affect both eyes.

*You should always check eyes for a grass seed awn



Treatment of choice will be influenced by the severity of the condition.

For mild cases can be treated with topical Benzathine Cloxacillin 250-375mg (Orbenin eye ointment- ¼ to ½ a tube applied) 72 hrs apart. Both eyes should be treated and the cream in the unaffected eye first. Pinkeye patches over the affected eye(s) can prevent further irritation due to flies, dust and UV light.

For more severe cases, some calves require an anti-inflammatory (such as meloxicam), long acting oxytetracycline and topical Benzathine Cloxacillin or injections of an antibiotic and steroid under the conjunctiva. The latter is required to be repeated in 36 hours. Pinkeye patches over the affected eye(s) or stitching the eyelids closed is also recommended.

In herd outbreak situations (>20% of the herd affected), it is often required to blanket treat all animals with a long acting oxytetracycline. This will assist in treating those affected, reduce the spread between calves and eliminate infection of carrier animals (those animals that carry the bacteria but don't have clinical signs).

Note: Infection appears to provide protection for next season

Preventing Pinkeye can be difficult. Recommendations include:

- Control flies with insecticide
- Avoid grazing long pasture- reduces irritation and contact with material contaminated by ocular discharge from affected stock.
- Avoid overcrowding.
- Remove affected individual from herd and treat them.
- Vaccination with Piliguard 3-6 weeks before pinkeye season (around October). The vaccine is a one dose initially ideally should be boosted annually.
 - o It should be noted that the vaccine is approximately 77% effective and only covers one strain of pinkeye (*Moraxella bovis*).