

Pesticide Certification Information

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INSECTS PESTS
OF
LIVESTOCK

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION SERVICE
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION INSTITUTION

PESTS OF CATTLE

FACE FLIES

This species is also a pest of horses, and is very similar to the house fly. Face flies do not bite but are extremely annoying as they crawl on or near the animal's face. Like horn flies, the eggs are deposited in fresh cow dung where the maggots develop. Face flies are abundant during warm, sunny weather. This species will not enter barns or deep-shaded areas. Therefore, one of the most effective means of protecting animals from these annoying flies is to keep the animals in the barn or to provide deep shade during sunny weather.

Face flies are connected with the high incidence of pink eye disease in beef and dairy cattle.

HORN FLIES

This is the most abundant and economically important species that attacks cattle in this state. The small, dark flies collect in large numbers on the backs and around the base of the horns. They pierce the skin and suck blood from cattle. Most of their adult life is spent on the host. The eggs are deposited in fresh cow dung, where the maggots develop. Several generations are produced during the summer; the life cycle is completed in about two weeks.

High numbers of horn flies on dairy cattle can reduce milk production by as much as 20 percent. Weight gain in beef animals is also adversely affected by these flies.

BARN ITCH (CHORIOPTIC MITES)

The white mite is extremely small (about 1/60th inch), oval, and has eight legs. The skin disease, barn itch, is caused by the feeding of these mites. They pierce the skin to get to the lymph on which they feed. The irritation to the skin results in intensive itching and discomfort.

Mite populations are usually very low during the summer months, allowing the symptoms of the disease to clear up on the cattle. In late fall, the mites increase rapidly in numbers, and they reach a peak in late winter.

Chorioptic mites may attack the skin on any part of the animal but are most commonly found on and between the rear legs, around the base of the tail, and along the flanks. The lesions on the skin, caused by the feeding of the mites, are usually not noticeable until the disease is well advanced; then scabs or scales form over these lesions. The skin underneath is only slightly swollen and inflamed. When the hair is rubbed off the affected area, the skin appears thick and wrinkled.

Observe cattle closely, especially in the fall. One of the first symptoms of barn itch is the animals' excessive licking of the affected areas. Examine the animals and check the itchy areas. Look closely for roughened skin. A definite diagnosis can be made by taking skin scrapings from the animals and isolating the mites that cause the disease. A veterinarian is qualified to make this diagnosis. (An inexperienced person might not be able to find the tiny mites.)

CATTLE GRUBS

The adult fly is a large, yellowish-brown, hairy fly that is prevalent during June and July. It sticks its eggs onto hairs on the legs and bellies of cattle. The tiny maggots burrow through the skin and muscle tissue, and six to eight months later (usually February or March) reach the region on the back. Here they can be readily noticed as cysts or lumps under the skin. The grubs make breathing holes in the skin, and one to two months later work their way out and drop to the ground to pupate.

The greatest abundance of cattle grubs is in the southwestern area. The adult female fly does not bite or sting when laying her eggs, but somehow the cattle sense danger. They run about wildly with their tails held in the air.

The accepted control of cattle grubs on non-dairy cattle is with systemic insecticides. The insecticide is absorbed into the blood stream; even in very minute amounts it is adequate to kill the grubs. This method of control eliminates the grubs before they reach the animal's back to damage the meat and hide.

CATTLE LICE

During late winter, cattle may be noticed doing an excessive amount of rubbing or locking. This indicates that they may be lousy. Check for small (less than 1/8 inch), gray-blue sucking insects, with crab-like claws on the ends of their legs. The lice spend their entire life cycle on the animals. Eggs, also called mites, are glued to the hairs. A life cycle is completed in slightly more than one month.

For the several species of lice, populations decline sharply during the spring, and lice are almost non-existent during the summer. In late fall, the numbers begin to increase, and peak in February and March.

PESTS OF SHEEP

SHEEP KEDS (SHEEP TICKS)

Sheep keds are wingless, biting flies--not ticks. They seem to prefer lambs to older animals. Keds are blood suckers, and when present in large numbers they will reduce the vigor of the infected animals. Two stages of the wingless fly are seen on the sheep: the adult and the pupa. The adult is about 1/4 inch, reddish-brown, and somewhat pear-shaped. The puparium are brown, nearly round, and about 3/16 inch in diameter. The larvae are retained within the body of the female until fully developed, and are then deposited on the wool where they immediately transform into the puparium.

Sheep keds also attack goats.

FOOT-SCAB MITES

A chorioptic mite attacks the skin of sheep just above the feet. The tiny, white, oval mites pierce the skin and feed on the lymph. The mites cause intense itching, and the infested animals constantly bite their feet trying to alleviate the problem. Infested animals are restless.

Observe sheep closely, especially in early winter. One of the first symptoms of foot scab is the excessive biting of the legs just above the hooves. The lower several inches of the legs will appear wet around the itchy areas. A definite diagnosis can be made by taking skin scrapings from the sheep and isolating the mites that cause the disease. A veterinarian is qualified to make this diagnosis.

Since the foot-scab mite attacks only the skin near the feet of the sheep, control of the mites is not difficult. Moving the animals through a foot bath containing the correct dosages of an approved pesticide is the practical method for eliminating the problem.

PESTS OF SWINE

HOG LICE

The hog louse is the largest louse known to exist in the state and is the only species that attacks hogs. A fully grown louse is about 1/4 inch and dirty-gray to brown with almost-black body margins. They spend their entire life on the animal and breed continuously. The eggs are glued to the hairs close to the skin.

The lice pester the hogs by piercing the skin to suck blood. The resulting itching and discomfort causes the animals to scratch with their feet and to rub against feeders, posts, or any stationary objects. The skin of infested areas often becomes thick and tender and may crack. Infested animals are usually restless.

A good time to combat lice is when the sows are being readied for farrowing. If the lice are controlled on the sows, they will not have a chance to move to the young pigs. Feeder pigs are sometimes infested with lice, in which case treatment of the entire herd may be advisable.

ITCH MITES OR MANGE MITES

A skin disease caused by tiny, white mites causes symptoms similar to those of lice infestations. Hogs will scratch and rub vigorously. The skin around the ears, eyes, and along the top of the neck may be inflamed, scaly, cracked and very tender. If the inside of the ears are inflamed and scabby, there is a strong possibility the animal is infested with itch or mange mites. A definite diagnosis can be made by taking skin scrapings from the animal and isolating the mites that cause the disease. A veterinarian is qualified to make this diagnosis.

As suggested for louse control, a good time to treat the disease is before the sows are placed in the farrowing pens. Feeder pigs may sometimes need treatment. Plan to treat feeder pigs at the earliest sign of symptoms.

PESTS OF HORSES

The biting flies include those that bite the animals and suck blood. Some of the most-encountered biting flies are the horse and deer flies, stable flies, horn flies, and mosquitoes.

An annoyance to horses is created by bot flies that dart about in the process of depositing eggs. A further source of trouble occurs when the living maggots move into the digestive tract of the horse and feed on the living tissue of the stomach or small intestines.

Face flies and house flies do not bite animals but annoy them. The face fly is especially bothersome as it crawls near the eyes, and on the face and the muzzle.

FACE FLIES

Face flies are discussed with pests of cattle.

HORN FLIES

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