

Column Name - The Heartland Minute

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*“Pinkeye Signs and Treatment”*

Have you ever scratched your eye or got a piece of dust stuck under your eyelid and dealt with the awful pains and annoyance that comes with it? Cattle can experience the same thing and this can often lead to pinkeye. Pinkeye is an eye infection that often first starts with watery eyes and then progresses to a swollen eye and even a white spot in the eyeball.

Cattle affected can be seen squinting, and if left untreated, cattle can develop corneal ulcers that are painful and make cattle light sensitive. The damage has likely already been done if you see the ulcers. That is why the earlier you can detect pinkeye and treat it, the better the outcome will be. As soon as the problem is identified, treatment options include administering antibiotics and sometimes you can place an eye patch on the infected eye or sew the eyelid shut to give them some comfort as they recover. If you have any old torn jeans that you are tired of fixing and ready to trash, those can make great eye patches.

Most calves are likely to recover, if treated early. However, once the disease has progressed and there has been scarring to the cornea, the recovery time is much longer and there may be some or total vision loss in the infected eye. It is important to note that, even though pinkeye is more common in the summer, it can develop any time of the year.

In terms of how pinkeye is spread from animal to animal, one of the more common ways is by face flies. This obviously makes fly prevention and control a very important part of any operation. Face flies are the size of house flies and tend to feed on secretions on the face and can cause damage to the cornea of a calf's eye. When the flies move to another animal, they will carry the disease with them. Other irritants to the eyes can come from seed heads, weeds, and dust in pastures. Grass seed irritation in the eye can allow bacteria to get into the eye more easily and cause problems.

If you are experiencing a pinkeye outbreak in your herd, then you may want to consider moving cattle to a different grazing pasture. This can separate the animals from the mechanical irritants like seed heads or weed seeds, if that is what is causing the problem. As always, you are encouraged to consult with your veterinarian about effective and appropriate treatment methods and other preventative measures.

Information comes from K-State University's Beef Cattle Institute specialists, Dr. Bob Larson, Dr. Brad White.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at [benjam63@ksu.edu](mailto:benjam63@ksu.edu), or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.