Wilson County Agricultural Article from Ruth Correll, Agricultural Extension Agent

Control Face Flies to Reduce Incidence of Pinkeye

It’s “fly swatter season” in Wilson County. I have noticed that fly populations are trending upward. Warmer weather and rain showers help make for the perfect “fly breeding haven”. Flies are not just irritating but can cause production losses in cattle.

Face flies can be a challenge to the cattle producer as they can transfer pinkeye within your herd and/or neighbors herds. Pinkeye incidence reports are currently on the increase. This disease is a highly contagious inflammation of the cornea and conjunctiva of cattle. When pinkeye is coupled with another disease such the infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) virus, pinkeye can cause an even more severe inflammatory condition and it can even result in blindness.

Face fly maggots develop in freshly deposited cattle manure. The four stage life cycle takes about 15 to 25 days. Face flies can overwinter as adults in sheltered areas such as barns or attics and become active again in the spring.

Face flies behavior makes them difficult to control. Face flies feed on secretions from the eye as well as nasal discharge. They are mostly attracted to the head area of cattle. One face fly can spread pinkeye to several animals in the same day.

In most situations, the first step in gaining control of pinkeye is to control the flies. In some cases they have adapted to various methods of control. There are some multi-pronged approaches that will lessen the impact. These include a strategic use of fly tags, sprays, dust bags and back rubbers. The important thing is to learn about the options and how to strategically utilize and combine the options. Options include:

1. Feed a larvicide or an insect growth regulator. Start 30 days before flies typically emerge. Continue until 30 days after a killing frost.

2. Use fly tags. Newer-generation fly tags that contain a higher concentration of insecticide are helpful in controlling fly populations. Use pyrethroid tags for two consecutive years, then switch to an organophosphate tag for one year to reduce pyrethroid resistance. Follow label directions on the number of tags/cow. Many tags require two tags/adult animal, and one tag/calf for optimum control. Research has shown that the key to using tags is to wait until you have 200 flies/cow to place the tags. If you apply the tags too early, you’ll have decreased protection. And be sure to remove the tags in 3-5 months, in order to prevent the release of minute amounts of insecticide that can lead to resistance issues. Reading and following the label is important.

3. Use dust bags/cattle rubs. The advantage of a dust bag or rub is that, if placed at a site where all cattle must use it, it can provide very economical control of face and horn flies. Proper placement and keeping it charged with insecticide are the keys. Use the same type of insecticide in the rub or dust bags as the ear tag.
4. Use sprays. Timely spraying of cattle throughout the year can be effective in reducing the fly population, but can be time-consuming if cattle are grazing an extensive area.

You can’t eliminate fly problems, but you can lessen their negative impact. Fly tags perform best when administered at the proper time and being strategic in type of control. Do this by using a broad-based approach.

The key to pinkeye treatment is catching the disease early. Observing the cow herd on a regular basis is very important. Consult with your herd-health veterinarian to develop a program tailored to your operation which may include fly control, pinkeye vaccination and pasture management.

Pasture management is another component of pinkeye control. Grass that is headed out can irritate eyes, causing them to tear and thus attracting face flies. Keeping pastures trimmed can reduce this irritation.

**Agricultural Market Report**

**Cattle Market Trends**

Feeder steers under 600 lbs. $7 to $9 higher, over 600 lbs. steady to $3 higher, $191.00-$370.00; Feeder heifers under 500 lbs. $6 to $10 higher, over 500 lbs. $3 higher, $180.00-$335.00; Slaughter cows steady, $94.00-$115.50; Slaughter bulls steady, $128.50-$152.00.

**Grain Market Trends**

Corn, soybeans, and wheat were up for the week. Corn – Cash price, $3.53-$4.03. July futures closed at $3.60 a bushel, up 9 cents. Soybeans – Cash price, $9.16-$9.86. July futures closed at $9.37 a bushel, up 3 cents. Wheat – Cash price, 5.03-$5.33. July futures closed at $5.17 a bushel, up 40 cents.

For additional information on these and other topics, contact the UT Extension Office, 925 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087, 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in all programs. Visit the UT/TSU Extension webpage at http://utextension.tennessee.edu/wilson or look for UT & TSU Extension, Wilson County on Facebook.

Submitted by:

Ruth Correll
Agricultural Agent
UT/TSU Extension, Wilson County
acorrell@utk.edu