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SUMMER LIVESTOCK FLY CONTROL

Dave Boxler, University of Nebraska Extension Educator notes there are three fly species in Nebraska that economically impact grazing cattle; horn fly, face fly, and stable fly.

HORN FLY - is the most important blood-feeding pest of pastured cattle and can have significant economic impact on cattle operations. Horn flies are normally seen on the backs, side, and poll areas of cattle. During the warm part of the day, horn flies can be observed on the belly of cattle. They feed on cattle 20-30 times a day. Horn fly feeding causes irritation, blood loss, decreased grazing efficiency, reduced weight gains, and a decline in milk production. Nebraska studies have demonstrated calf weaning weights were 10 -20 pounds higher when horn flies were controlled on mother cows. The economic threshold level is 200 flies per animal. Chemical control methods are; backrubbers, dust bags, insecticidal ear tags, pour-ons, oral larvicides, and sprays. Insecticide ear tags are a convenient method of horn fly control. Some horn flies in Nebraska are resistant to pyrethroid insecticides. One of the resistant management recommendations for horn flies is to rotate insecticides. Backrubbers and dust bags are an effective way to reduce horn fly numbers if cattle are forced to use them. Sprays and pour-on will provide 7-21 days of control and will need to be repeated throughout the fly season for effective control. Oral larvicides prevent fly larvae from developing into adults. An important factor when using an oral larvicide is insuring daily consumption. A complicating issue when using an oral larvicide is that of horn fly immigration from neighboring untreated herds which will mask the effectiveness of an oral larvicide.

FACE FLY - adults closely resemble house flies except they are slightly larger and darker than the house fly. The persistence and habit of congregating about the eyes and nose of animals helps distinguish the face fly from the house fly in the field. House flies may congregate on the faces of cattle in confined feedlots and dairy pens. Face flies are pasture flies and are not found in feedlots. The face fly is a non-biting fly that feeds on animal secretions, nectar, and dung liquids. Adult female face flies typically cluster around an animal's eyes, mouth, and muzzle, causing extreme annoyance. Face flies vector pinkeye, a contagious inflammation of the cornea and conjunctiva of cattle. The best methods of reducing face fly numbers is using a treatment where the animals are forced to contact an insecticide on a daily basis such as a dust bag, oiler, spray or an insecticide impregnated ear tag. Ear tags should be applied at the label recommended rate. Both cows and calves must be treated if control is to be achieved. Pinkeye vaccines are available and should be considered if face flies and pinkeye are an annual problem.

STABLE FLIE - are pests of Nebraska feedlots, dairies and pastured cattle. Stable flies are blood feeding flies, mainly feeding on the legs of cattle. Stable flies stay on the animal long enough to obtain a blood meal and then seek a shaded place to rest and digest the blood meal. Stable flies may take blood meals several times a day. Stable fly bites are painful and when flies are abundant cattle stomp their legs, bunch at pasture corners, or stand in water to avoid being bitten. Research conducted at the University of Nebraska showed a reduction in average daily gain of 0.44 lbs. per head per day in 84-day trials with animals that did not receive an insecticide treatment compared to animals that received a treatment. The economic threshold of 5 flies per leg is easily exceeded in Nebraska pasture conditions.

The only adult management option available for the control of stable flies on range cattle is the use of animal sprays. Sprays can be applied using a low pressure sprayer or can be applied with a mist blower sprayer. Weekly applications of these products will be required to achieve reduction in fly numbers. Sanitation or clean-up of wasted feed at winter feeding sites may reduce localized fly development. Fly control methods should be in accordance with veterinarian recommendation and always read and follow label recommendations. Nebraska fly control methods are at <http://entomology.unl.edu/livestock/2014flyrecs.shtml>

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