

July 23, 2004

LIVESTOCK AND HUMAN TIPS FOR THE DOG DAYS

Summer's hot, humid days can take a toll on people and animals. Producers should monitor their herds carefully, especially when the heat index (temperature and humidity) is high. Last week, I assisted a neighbor with putting small square bales in a barn one evening. After about five hours, I was quickly reminded I could not do what I used to be able to do. The dog days of summer can have a bite.

Generally, heat stress is less of a problem in cow herds than in feedlots as long as cows have access to ample supplies of clean water and grass. However, the heat can cause cows to congregate around watering places and areas of shade, which can contribute to a greater incidence of pinkeye and foot rot.

Pinkeye, found primarily in calves and young cows, often is initiated by irritation from dust, pollen or bromegrass seed heads, which makes eyes water. This attracts face flies, which transmit the bacteria that causes pinkeye.

A good fly control program using several control methods, such as fly tags, sprays or dust bags/back rubbers and rotating insecticide products, will help prevent pinkeye. Some producers have had good results by vaccinating calves against pinkeye before going to summer pastures. If cattle are infected, early treatment with antibiotics directly under eyelids and patching eyes to stop further irritation usually is effective.

Foot rot is an infection of the foot caused by an organism that is commonly found in manure and mud. The organism enters the foot through breaks in the skin between toes, hoof cracks or through scrapes caused by rough surfaces. Smoothing out rough areas with a blade around watering places and preventing cattle from standing in mud around ponds will reduce the incidence of foot rot. Organic iodine fed in mineral supplements also will help prevent an infection.

Breeding bulls also need to be monitored for foot and eye problems. Since they are more likely to carry large fly populations, spraying bulls with insecticide may be needed. Planning should be done now for preconditioning spring calves. Plan vaccinations with a veterinarian and choose a weaning method such as "pasture weaning" calves across the fence from their mothers to reduce calf stress and weight loss.

TOXIC BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

Fencing out ponds and developing a continuous flow pipe below the pond's dam will keep cattle from standing in mud and eliminate the potential of a toxic blue-green algae bloom that can occasionally occur on pond surfaces and kill small animals, fish and cattle. Most of the toxicity is associated with the planktonic species and particularly with *Anabaena*, *Aphanizamenon* and *Microcystis*. It is rare for these species to cause toxicity and scientists do not know the cause or conditions that bring on toxins.



A toxic blue-green algae alert was issued last week on Swan Lake near Tobias. One family in Saline County reported symptoms from swimming in Swan Lake this month. Skin irritations and gastrointestinal problems are the main risks to people from these toxins. The blue-green algae causes the typical pea-soup, green color in water and during stagnant water conditions, form a surface scum. One scientist reports toxins developing 45% to 75% of the time when certain types of blue-green algae occur.

Nebraska Cooperative Extension's water quality program has developed a volunteer monitoring program to check lakes, sand pits or other water bodies for blue-green algae. Free test kits are available to livestock producers, pond or lake owners, managers or users. The test kits allow you to check for potential toxin-producing algae. Samples are returned to UNL for processing and those who submit samples are notified of results. Lake warnings to the public are higher than normal this year and excellent information about blue-green algae can be found at: <http://www.deq.state.ne.us>.

For more information or a test kit, call Hilary Hansen at (402) 472-8190 or Triscia Liedle at (402) 472-3305.

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