

Since March this year, the NSW Farmers Exotic Disease, Plant Health and Quarantine Committee has been involved in a theileriosis working group set up to advise levy based industry bodies on appropriate research projects.

Right away two highly urgent priorities were obvious.

1. The availability in Australia of an effective therapeutic agent (medicine) to treat affected animals.
2. A vaccine to prevent infection in susceptible (non immune) animals.

Along with other members of 'the working' group, NSW Farmers has endeavoured to facilitate the importation into Australia of a treatment already available overseas. The stumbling block has been a suitable time period being set as the minimum withholding period, so that residues do not enter the human food chain in meat or milk.

This has involved copious research and two trips to Canberra to see APVMA. I can assure members that although progress is slow, no stone will be left unturned to achieve this. NSW Farmers has also met with Katrina Hodgkinson's office twice to discuss the role NSW DPI will play in this, and other theileriosis related matters.

On the vaccine front, NSW Farmers has the support of MLA to fund studies into the possibility of using another species of *Theileria*, which is non pathogenic and has been in Australia for over 100 years, to immunise non immune cattle. This process has not started yet but appears imminent.

In the meantime, cattle producers who have herds affected by Bovine Theileriosis, right now, may find the following information useful.

- Ticks (*Haemaphysalis* or bush tick) carry the disease. Therefore the risk of infection increases the more ticks there are and the more active they are. Methods to reduce the ticks biting cattle, such as tickicides during the tick season (which will vary depending on the coldness and length of winter), anectodotally have reduced and often eliminated infection of cattle leading to clinical symptoms.
- It appears that once infected, animals are infected for life
- Immunity gained by exposure to both the non pathogenic and pathogenic species of *Theileria* appears to wane if animals are removed from an infected property. When they return they may succumb to the disease and may benefit if treated as for calves (see below).
- Calves born to infected cows do not receive immunity from their mothers and can succumb to clinical disease from 2 weeks to 4 months of age. This probably depends upon the time they were born and the seasonal activity of ticks at that time.

Some success may be obtained by treating calves with Tickicides to reduce infestation and then gradually withdrawing the treatment to allow immunity to develop (please consult your vet on this phase of control). This method may be useful with non immune introduced cattle.



- Since the animals immune response mechanisms are vital to suppressing clinical diseases, cows in advanced pregnancy or animals under nutritional stress appear to be more susceptible to clinical disease.

NSW Farmers is seeking to hear from members or veterinarians who have experienced the effects of bovine theileriosis in their districts to assist our efforts in lobbying for the introduction of appropriate treatment and the further development of a suitable vaccine. This can be done by writing to:

Dr Peter Carter
Chairman
Exotic Disease Committee
NSW Farmers
GPO Box 1068
Sydney NSW 2001

Or alternatively email policy@nswfarmers.org.au.

For more details on the disease the following link on NSW DPI web site has more information - <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/info-vets/theileria>.

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