

Gulf Coast Tick Infests Arkansas Livestock

FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

A tick that can cause ear deformities in cattle is firmly established in Arkansas, say researchers with the University of Arkansas.

The Gulf Coast tick “historically resided within 100 miles of the Gulf and Atlantic coasts,” said Kelly Loftin, extension entomologist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. “It has since been redistributed with the transport of cattle and egret migration.”

The ticks arrived in Arkansas within the past decade, he said. Loftin was a co-author on a study completed in early 2010 that verified the Gulf Coast tick’s presence in Arkansas.

The tick can transfer heartwater disease, which can cause high fever and sudden death from encephalitis. However, the disease is almost exclusively found in sub-Saharan Africa and some Caribbean islands.

The tick’s biggest effect may be another part of the head.

“What we’re going to see in Arkansas is similar to what we’ve seen in other southern states that have the tick: cases of ‘gotch ear,’ in which a cow’s ear becomes infested with ticks and causes the ear to deform.”

The problem isn’t unsolvable, Loftin said. “It can be controlled.

Ear tags impregnated with insecticide will stop the tick. Spray applications will work too.”

Loftin said the state’s cattle might not currently be overrun with Gulf Coast ticks because insecticide-impregnated ear tags on cows work so well on this tick.

“I look at this news from the standpoint that this is just going to be an additional cattle pest for farmers to deal with.”

For more information about the Gulf Coast tick’s establishment in Arkansas, read the University of Arkansas study by Rebecca Trout www.fcla.edu/FlaEnt/fe93p120.pdf. Δ



Figure 25b. Gulf Coast tick, *Amblyomma maculatum* Koch. (Mat Pound, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org)



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