

Louse Alert For Cattle In Southwest Missouri

MT. VERNON, MO.

Reports are that lice are showing up on cattle in southwest Missouri. According to Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension for over 40 years, this is the time of year when those reports usually come in.

"Flies and ticks are easily visible on cattle so it's easy for the owner to get concerned about the impact they can have on profitability. Just because you can't see the parasite doesn't mean it's not there and costing you money. You almost need to get cattle in the head chute and inspect them closely to detect a louse problem," said Cole.

The louse buildup has been going on since back in the fall of 2012 according to Cole. Heavily infested cattle will now be showing signs of loss of hair and discomfort, which results in the cattle rubbing on fences, bale rings, corral, feed bunks, etc.

There are two types of lice normally found on cattle in Missouri. According to Cole, they are referred to as chewing and sucking lice.

The chewing or biting lice primarily irritate cattle, both young and old.

"The blood sucking louse actually pierces the skin and the blood feeding interferes with growth and milk production. Both types of lice may be found on cattle in small numbers in the warmer months," said Cole. "During the winter they multiply rapidly when long hair is on the cattle."

There are numerous products and methods of application that help hold louse infestations in check. Sprays, back rubbers, dust bags, pour-ons and injectables are effective when used according to label instructions.

When treating with sprays, a second application is needed in 14 to 18 days to kill the nymphs that hatch following the first spray.

"Close observation may reveal that some cat-

tle seem to attract more lice than others. They should be culled from the herd at an opportune time as they could be carriers and contribute to the spread of the problem," said Cole. Δ



Patches of hair on the barbed wire gives evidence of cattle scratching to relieve their louse discomfort.

Photos by MU Extension Livestock Specialist Eldon Cole.



An Angus bull shows signs of a louse infestation.

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