

Still Important To Watch Your Herd Throughout The Summer

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With summer in full swing and the large amounts of rain, mosquitoes and ticks are in abundance. It is still necessary to check all cattle for potential health problems such as anaplasmosis. Anaplasmosis is an infectious disease of cat-

tle caused by several species of the blood parasite *Anaplasma*.

Anaplasma is unusual because the clinical signs are most severe in adult animals. Individual animals infected with the *Anaplasma* parasite become anemic (due to destruction of red blood cells), weak, gaunt, off-feed and lose weight rapidly. Difficult respiration, fever of 105° F or higher, dehydration, constipation and jaundice, or yellowing of body tissues, are common. Affected animals are often excitable or belligerent. Death may occur within 24 to 48 hours of the onset of symptoms and may be the first indication that anything is wrong in a herd. Abortion after recovery is common. Recovery from an undiagnosed infection results in the development of a carrier animal that serves as a reservoir for the disease and occurs more frequently than death. Carrier animals have immunity against *Anaplasma*, so even if they are infected later in life, they will generally not get sick.

Anaplasma parasite can be transmitted either mechanically or biologically. Hard ticks, *Dermacentor* sp., are the natural biological vectors of anaplasmosis in the United States. Once in the tick, the parasite can remain active throughout the lifecycle of the tick and can be

transmitted several months later. Mechanical transmission of infected red blood cells must occur within a few minutes, as the parasite does not survive more than a few minutes outside the animal. Mechanical transmission can occur via tattoo equipment, needles, dehorners, ear taggers, castrating knives, other surgical instruments and the mouthparts of biting insects such as biting flies and mosquitoes. However, face flies, houseflies and other non-biting insects do not transmit the parasite. Horn flies, although they bite, typically do not go from animal to animal so they are not thought to spread *Anaplasma*.

If you have any cattle with this disease, it is crucial to control ticks and follow strict sanitation practices during vaccinations and other health management procedures to stop the spread of the disease to healthy animals. It is also important to remember animals that recover from *Anaplasma* are carriers and can spread the disease.

Affected cattle either die or begin a recovery within four days after the first signs of the disease. The mortality rate increases with the age of the animal. Treatment of *Anaplasma* is most effective if given in the early stage of the disease. Animals in later stages of the disease may be so anemic that the stress of handling them will kill them. Provide affected animals with easy access to food and water and a low-stress environment. It may take surviving animals up to three months to completely recover from the disease.

Contact your veterinarian if you suspect *Anaplasma* on your farm. This will allow a positive diagnosis of *Anaplasma* to be made and the best course of treatment implemented. Δ

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