

Pinkeye (Infectious Keratoconjunctivitis)

This is a common disease in cattle, sheep and goats. Symptoms often seen are: increased tear production (weepy eye), inflamed conjunctivae, uncontrolled twitching or blinking of the eyelids, blueing and ulceration of the cornea, and in severe cases complete blindness or rupture of the eyeball. It can affect one or both eyes. It tends to spread rapidly throughout a mob/herd given the right circumstances. The course of infection can last several days to several weeks. Rarely, an animal is left permanently blind. Sometimes the animal's appetite can be decreased due to the pain associated with the infection, or if the animal is blind and cannot see to get access to food.

It can occur throughout the year but we often see outbreaks in warmer weather. It can occur in animals of any age, but young stock seem to be affected more.

There are many different "bugs" that are involved in this disease, but most commonly *Chlamydia*, *Moraxella* and *Mycoplasma* organisms are isolated.

Risk factors for pinkeye outbreaks

- Increased UV light (i.e. limited shade)
- Flies (can spread infection)
- Dust (irritates the sensitive structures of the eye)
- Thistles and long grass with seed heads
- Recent yarding or transport
- Mixing with other mobs
- Trace element/nutritional deficiencies (e.g. copper, selenium, Vitamin A)

Prevention and treatment of pinkeye

Prevention involves good management practices, especially during the risk periods of summer/autumn. These include:

- Yarding or shifting stock in early morning when there may be less dust.
- Don't mix mobs of animals if possible
- Quarantine new stock for 1-2 weeks.
- Topping paddocks to remove the long grass and thistles
- There is one vaccine available for cattle in New Zealand. The idea is to vaccinate stock 3-6 weeks before the onset of the pinkeye season. It will help in the prevention of pinkeye caused by three strains of *Moraxella*.
- Isolation of affected animals as soon as symptoms are recognised.
- Providing shade to affected animals.
- Wearing gloves and changing them between animals to prevent spread.
- Calling a vet during an outbreak and using appropriate antibiotic therapy. They may also suggest blood sampling to check copper/selenium levels.

Strict hygiene is super important when handling these animals. Pink eye is extremely contagious. Please call us on 06 758 4006 if you think you have a pink eye outbreak on your property and would like some advice.