

News Column

6/5/19

Parasites in your Livestock

By: Beth Crandall

A lack of parasite control can turn very costly for ranchers. There are four main parasites that cattle producers are faced with each year: flies, worms, ticks, and lice.

Flies

Flies are always going to be present, especially where there are cattle. Flies carry many diseases between livestock and other animals. Fly control is difficult, but very important to prevent the potential spread of disease throughout your herd. Fly populations are increased with the presence of manure. Pasture rotation can be a good remedy to help decrease the number of flies around cattle. Fly tags are an easy remedy to help decrease fly populations, as well as species specific insecticides.

Worms

Worms are internal parasites that decrease immunity, productivity, and overall health of livestock. Low stocking density is important for decreasing accessibility to worms within your herd. Dewormers are a useful tool to remove worm populations from your stock. There are several different classes and types of dewormers, each specific to the different types of worms that may be present in your herd. It is important to use the correct type of dewormer, in order to decrease resistance and target specific ones.

Ticks and Lice

Ticks are external parasites that are found in the environment and migrate onto livestock. They can carry protozoal diseases that spread illness through cattle populations. Lice are also an external parasite that live on cattle. Both biting and sucking lice causes issues in cattle populations. The most common issue that an owner will notice is the cattle rubbing their hair out. Fly and worm treatments should help control lice and ticks.

Management Strategies

Deworming is an excellent parasite management strategy, as long as it is done correctly. Deworming should only be done if parasites are present in your herd. Regular deworming done on cattle that do not have worms present, increases resistant parasites. Deworming should only be done on cattle that are showing symptoms (itching, diarrhea, weight loss) or have a high fecal egg count, not the entire herd. Don't feel like you need to deworm your herd if they are not showing symptoms. If other management strategies are being followed, deworming may not be necessary. If we only treat those who are affected, we are decreasing the chance of having a resistant population of parasites. Pasture rotation is a great parasite management tool, preventing cattle from repeatedly eating off of ground that has their stool on it. Alternate

species grazing and haying will also reduce the number of larvae present. Be sure to avoid overgrazing, as this increases exposure to parasites.

If parasites are present, a fecal float should be performed to know what type of dewormer should be used. Dewormers are parasite specific, therefore it is important to use one that will target the parasites that are present in your herd. Product ingredients should be rotated to prevent resistance.