

EXTERNAL PARASITE CONTROL IN CATTLE

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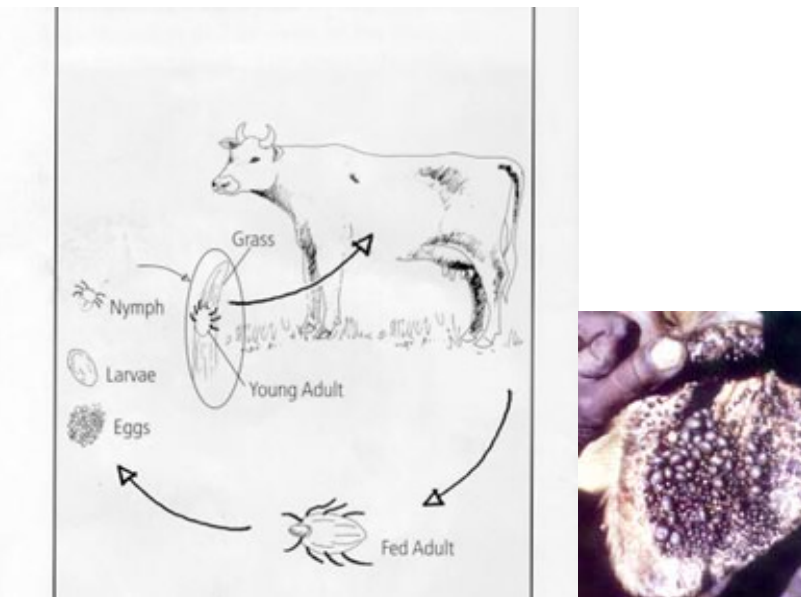
Cattle can be infected by several parasites of the skin (external parasites) which feed on the animal's skin and blood. These parasites look like insects. There are various types.

Mites are very small and cannot be seen without a microscope. They live and lay their eggs on the skin.

Lice are big enough for you to see. People can be infected with head lice. Cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats can be infected with different lice which attack the body, legs or tail region. Lice live on the skin and lay their eggs on hairs.



Ticks are bigger than lice and can be as big as a fingernail. Young ticks have 6 legs while adults have 8 legs. The life of a tick starts when a female tick lays eggs on the ground. The eggs hatch and go through the stages shown in the diagram below. The young ticks climb onto grass, where they wait for an animal to come near, upon which they attach themselves onto the cow/calf and start feeding on the blood of at



least one animal. It is then that they transfer the diseases. Once they are full of blood, they drop off onto the pasture to lay eggs and start the cycle again.

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY EXTERNAL PARASITES

Mites cause mange. They infect the head, legs, body or tail region, causing the skin to become crusted and cause loss of hair and wool. The infected area itches and the animal scratches, spending less time eating. The infections cause loss of valuable wool in sheep and damage hides of cattle and goats.

Lice also cause irritation of the skin and the animal scratches, rubs and bites the infected areas. The animal loses, or does not gain weight, and looks in poor condition. Both lice and mites can pass from one animal to another. If lice are on the animal, you will find them or their eggs on the skin, but if you do not see any lice or lice eggs, the animal probably has mange caused by mites.

Ticks are very important parasites. They bite the animal, suck its blood, and when full, they drop off onto the pasture where they can live for many months without feeding again. Animals can be poisoned or paralysed by the bites of some ticks. Ticks also spread diseases, tick-borne diseases such as East Coast Fever, which can cause death of the animal. With the blood loss, ticks cause reduced growth and milk, and damage to the skin.

PREVENTION/CONTROL OF MITES AND LICE

Mites and lice are controlled by applying an appropriate pour-on dewormer, or washing the infected area and then spraying or dipping the animal (see dipping or spraying below) with a suitable treatment. All of the flock or herd must be treated to ensure control. Some animals can be infected but show little or no signs of infection and the parasites will spread from them to other animals if they are not treated too.

PREVENTION/CONTROL OF TICKS (AND TICKBORNE DISEASES)

1. Rotational or Zero grazing

Moving animals to different pastures and resting the contaminated pasture for a length of time can help to control the ticks. Cutting the bushes and ploughing the affected area can help to control ticks. Large numbers of ticks can be found around water holes and animal shelters. Use grass or hay free from ticks and avoid contact with other animals.

2. Hand picking (plucking)

If an animal has only a few ticks these can be carefully pulled off making sure the mouthparts of the tick are removed. Rubbing ticks with a cloth soaked in kerosene (paraffin) will make them drop off the animal. Keeping poultry near the cattle can help to reduce numbers of ticks, because the birds will eat the ticks.

3. Chemical control

Large numbers of ticks are treated using sprays and pour-ons. It will be necessary to treat all of the herd or flock. Certain commercial spray and pour-on chemicals (acaricides) are used to kill ticks on the animal. Seek the advice of your veterinarian.

Farmers have also experimented with home made products and found the following effective: A) Grind 250 g of dried flowers with a little water into a paste. Dissolve this paste in 10 litres of water and leave it standing for 12 hour, then sieve and apply all over the animal. B) Grind 20 g of dried tobacco leaves with a liter of water. Leave it standing for 6 hours. Add 5 litres of water and apply all over the animal.

4. Proper fencing

Proper fencing of the farm to keep wild animals and stray dogs should be enhanced as they might act as a source of ticks on the farm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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