

Current Status of Parasite Control at the Feed Yard



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KEYWORDS

• Feedlot cattle • Parasites • Anthelmintics • Nematodes • Receiving

KEY POINTS

- Fly and louse infestations are readily discerned and remedied in feedlot cattle.
- Tapeworm and fluke infections are accepted as probable but, given the lack of anthelmintics with realistic efficacy against these infections, these helminths are allowed to persist without treatment.
- Nematode infections are considered ubiquitous with cattle coming from pasture and are targeted with a macrocyclic lactone (ML), usually in combination with a benzimidazole.
- Populations of nematodes seem to be effectively controlled by a combination of anthelmintic treatment, animal resistance and resilience, lack of reinfection, and diet.

Producer-perceived importance of parasitisms in the beef industry is most elevated at the stocker level, of lesser gravity at the cow-calf level, and of least significance at the feed yard. The reduced perceived importance at the feed yard is contingent on the administration of an anthelmintic (alone or in combination with a complementary anthelmintic) at receiving and insecticidal remedies put in place when warranted. To that point, it has been aptly stated, “stocker operations provide a large proportion of the health and nutritional management of young, lightweight animals that feedlots prefer to avoid when possible.”¹ At the feed yard, parasite significance is dwarfed by the consideration directed toward economics (animal and feed), supply (animal and feed), the 24/7 management of animals, facilities and waste, and, finally, oversight and control of microbial and viral diseases (primarily respiratory). More attention is provided at the feed yard for fly (stable and face) and pest bird (starling) control than to the possible postarrival presence and importance of parasites. Only a visit to a feed yard is needed to achieve this mind-set. The animals are in exceptional condition, under constant monitoring for health and appetite, and fed extensively researched diets at prescribed rates—a system of production that seems to cancel

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(or conceal) any direct or indirect cause of economic impact due to parasites. Given these conditions, there is still much to be cited relative to parasite control at the feed yard: the parasites, the parasiticides, and animal performance/productivity given the interplay of the two and what needs to be done in the future relative to parasite control and assessment at the feed yard.

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In writing an article about controlling parasitisms of feedlot cattle, information should be included as provided by the people who actually oversee the cattle and whatever management and treatment are prescribed for parasite control. To that end, a questionnaire was circulated to 10 feedlot veterinarians who are collectively responsible for monitoring millions of feedlot cattle for disease prevention; and millions of cattle that are replaced by millions more approximately every 4 months. Unfortunately, only 4 sets of answers were received that were comprehensive. From many face-to-face discussions with these veterinarians and their peers, the authors think that the limited answers did accurately portray the appreciation for parasites at the feed yard and those actions (as well as mind-sets) that result. A fifth veterinarian confided that the answers to these questions are to some degree “corporate property”—the results of many experiences, in-house studies, corporate round tables, and so forth. The authors appreciate this opinion. Having said that, the authors thank the respondents—feedlot veterinarians, who, for the sake of their anonymity, are quoted as veterinarians a, b, c, and d. The questions and their answers follow.

Question 1: Are lice the only external parasites to consider when treating incoming cattle?

- a. Lice during the winter are our target pest. Grubs are rare but costly due to carcass trim. We use Cydectin, Dectomax, or Ivomec for worm control and get grubs as a freebie. We treat all cattle for lice starting in October and ending in March with a pour-on pyrethrin at initial processing and again at reimplant. If we have a “lice break” during the feeding period, we will mist (fog) the cattle at the feed bunk to avoid running them through the chute again.

Stable flies are a big problem for cattle at the perimeter of the pens. Seems like the flies are too lazy to fly deep into the feedlot, attacking the first cattle they find. Parasitic wasps are commonly used for control along with manure management, cleaning up forage debris and mowing grass around the feedlots to less than 4 inches. Ticks, horn flies, and face flies are not a problem, and house flies pester people more than the cattle.

- b. Louse infestations are the only externals we consider important on cattle at arrival. We use injectable ivermectin year round for worms, and we feel that gets the sucking lice. From November to March, we also use a pour-on permethrin. Cattle coming into the southern yards don't get the pour-on, because we don't see large lice burdens on those cattle.

We use premise spray and bait for house flies and parasitic wasps for stable flies. Pen maintenance and minimizing standing water and manure is also a focal point for controlling flies.

Where we get into issues with flies is when we get abnormally wet weather during optimal fly temperatures. Our approach in that case is more of the same: pen maintenance and aggressive premise spraying.

- c. Lice are the big problem, but we still see grubs. We start using pyrethrin pour-on around October 1, and continue to spring. If we get long periods of overcast and

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