Livestock Insects–Cattle

Mites (Cattle Scabies)

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Identification and Field Biology

Mites, like ticks, are members of the class Arachnida, so they have two main body parts and four pairs of legs on the adults but only three pairs on the immature mites. There are three scabies mite species: Psoroptic scabies, Psoroptes ovis, Sarcoptic scabies, Sarcoptes scabiei and Chorioptic scabies, Chorioptes bovis. A fourth mite, Demodex bovis, the cattle follicle mite may also be found in cattle. The Psoroptes mite is the most serious scab mite and requires reporting and quarantine. The other three species are more of a problem for dairy cattle in the Northeast part of the U.S. Scabies mites attack any part of the body, particularly areas of thick hair. Lesions most commonly occur on the withers, along the back and around the tail. Symptoms of scabies may not be evident until winter because, like cattle lice, the reproduction rates of mites increase during cool weather and decrease during hot weather. The life cycle is as short as 10-12 days during the winter.

Animal Response and Economic Losses

Mites spread from animal to animal by contact. The Psoroptic scabies mites do not burrow in the skin as do the other species, but their feeding causes severe skin irritation and itching. Rubbing and scratching by the animal further irritates the infested area. Eventually, a scab forms, which provides a sheltered and optimum situation for the mite. Under these conditions, they increase rapidly. Infested animals fail to do well, and loss of hair during the winter can cause the animal’s death.

Management Approaches

Scabies infested cattle must be treated with either ivermectin or eprinomectin.

Categories: Livestock insects, Cattle, Mites, Cattle scabies

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