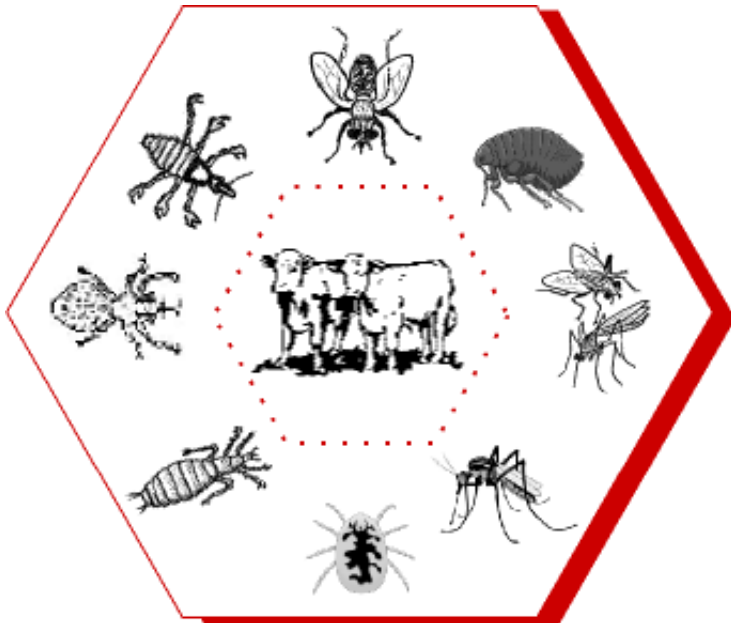




DEPARTMENT: AGRICULTURE

EXTERNAL PARASITES OF CATTLE



Jenny Turton

EXTERNAL PARASITES OF CATTLE

- ◆ **External parasites live on the skin of cattle or visit them to feed**
- ◆ **The most important groups are flies and ticks**
- ◆ **Lice and mites are usually not very important, but do occur occasionally.**
- ◆ **Most of these parasites can be seen with the eye alone, although for mites you need to look through a microscope**

Why are external parasites important?

- ◆ **Some are just a nuisance to the animals**
- ◆ **Some cause skin and eye irritation and damage, which can lead to bacterial infection and fly maggot attack**
- ◆ **Some create large wounds**
- ◆ **Others suck blood causing the animals to become weak**
- ◆ **Some can spread diseases between animals**

- ◆ **Some can cause disease through poisonous bites (toxins)**
- ◆ **All of this can result in decreased production and even death**

FLIES

- ◆ **Flies are most active in the rainy season and warm months**
- ◆ **There are many types of flies**
- ◆ **Some are biting flies, others are important because they lay eggs on animals, while others irritate the animals**

Biting flies

- ◆ **There are many biting flies and these include blackflies, biting midges, mosquitoes, stable flies, horseflies and tsetse flies**
- ◆ **Some flies such as black flies, mosquitoes and midges attack animals in swarms**
- ◆ **These flies suck blood and cause irritation, painful bites and blood loss**
- ◆ **Many of these can also spread diseases among animals, such as gallsickness (horseflies); three-day stiffness (biting midges and mosquitoes); lumpy-skin disease (biting flies); Rift Valley fever (mosquitoes); nagana (tsetse flies); pinkeye (face flies)**



Flies which cause fly strike

- ◆ **Other flies (blowflies and screw-worm flies) are important because they lay their eggs on animals**
- ◆ **The eggs hatch into larvae (maggots) and can cause severe injuries to animals**
- ◆ **The condition caused by maggots living on animals is called fly strike**
- ◆ **Tick bites and cuts can become infested with blowflies or screwworm. This can lead to severe wounds and even death**

Treatment of fly strike

- ◆ **Clip and clean coat around the area affected, remove maggots and treat with insecticidal cream, powder or spray. The animals may need treatment with antibiotics**

Control of flies

- ◆ **Practise good stable and kraal hygiene (clean regularly)**
- ◆ **Remove manure to large bins to restrict fly breeding and to make compost**
- ◆ **Drain damp areas to stop breeding of mosquitoes and biting midges**
- ◆ **Use dips, sprays and treat wounds to prevent fly and strike problems**
- ◆ **Immediately treat skin wounds so that strike does not occur**

TICKS



- ◆ There are many different types of ticks
- ◆ Ticks are usually most active during the warmer and wetter parts of the year
- ◆ Ticks suck blood from animals, and large tick numbers can lead to blood loss and weakness
- ◆ Some ticks have long mouthparts and can cause severe skin damage, which can lead to fly strike and bacterial infection
- ◆ Ticks can also spread diseases such as heartwater (bont ticks), redwater (blue ticks), gallsickness (blue ticks) and corridor disease (brown ticks) among animals
- ◆ Some ticks (Karoo paralysis tick, glossy brown tick) can cause paralysis as a result of the toxins they produce
- ◆ Other ticks (small smooth bontlegged tick) can cause sweating sickness as a result of the toxins they produce

Treatment of tick damage

- ◆ Clean the wound, treat with an insecticidal-disinfectant combination to heal the wound and to keep flies away. Antibiotics may be needed

Control of ticks

- ◆ Control is by acaricides which are chemicals that kill ticks or prevent their attachment. They can be used as sprays (handsprays or race-sprays), dips, pour-ons, spot treatment or injectable drugs

❖ **Some breeds of cattle are more resistant to ticks and tick-borne diseases**

❖ **It is best to get advice from your state veterinarian or animal health technician on control methods for ticks in your area**

MITES



❖ **Mites are very small, and can usually not be seen with the naked eye**

❖ **Mites live on the animal for the entire lifecycle and are spread among animals by close contact**

❖ **They cause skin irritation, which leads to rubbing, scratching and hair loss; this is called mange**

❖ **Irritation from mites is usually seen on the head, neck and legs. It is associated with crowded conditions and poor husbandry**

❖ **There are different types of mange, depending on the type of mite involved: sarcoptic mange, demodectic mange, chorioptic mange and psoroptic mange**

❖ **Skin disease with irritation, scratching, rubbing and biting should always make one suspect mange or lice**

❖ **Because it is impossible or very difficult to see the mites with the naked eye, diagnosis is by skin scrapings and looking for mites under the microscope**

Control and treatment of mites

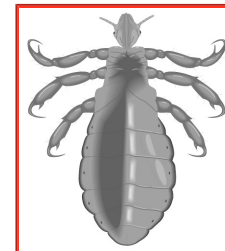
❖ **Control and treatment is by acaricides, which may be injectable drugs such as ivermectin,**

handsprays or dips

◆ Sarcoptic mange may require repeat treatments

LICE

◆ Lice are wingless. They live exclusively on the skin and cannot survive for long periods off the animals



◆ Lice can be seen by parting the hair; you can see them moving and their eggs may be attached to the hair

◆ Lice are very specific to the type of animal and will not spread to other animal species. They are spread by contact among animals of the same species

◆ There are sucking and biting (chewing) lice

◆ Heavy lice infestations can cause irritation and distress. Animals rub and lick themselves, and damage their hides

◆ Sucking lice can also cause weakness from blood loss

◆ Lice are usually associated with unhealthy livestock in crowded conditions

◆ Often heavy lice infestations are secondary to some other disease problem, largely because sick animals do not groom themselves

Control of lice

◆ Control by insecticides (dusts, pour-ons, spot treatment, handsprays, dips)

**For further information contact your animal health
technician or veterinarian**

or

***Animal Health for Developing Farmers*
ARC-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute
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This publication is available on the web at : www.nda.agric.za/publications



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