

PINK EYE

Pink eye is a **highly contagious bacterial infection** of the eye in both cattle and sheep. Whilst it is a relatively new disease to Circular Head it is found worldwide and is of major economic importance. Pink eye is spread by flies, direct contact from cow to cow or from contact with infected railings, yards etc. It most commonly affects younger stock or herds that have not previously been infected, but it can also affect older cows that have no immunity to the bacteria.

Whilst pink eye has the ability to affect large numbers of animals, if treated early the disease can be managed effectively. So early detection based on *clinical signs* is important.

Clinical Signs:

- Squinting, excessive blinking or staying out of direct sunlight
- Excessive tear production or a clear watery discharge
- Clouding of the eye or the appearance of a crater or bulging central area of the eyeball.
- A pink rim to the eyeball - from the blood vessels growing across the eye to heal the ulcer as well as the inflammation of the other tissues in the eye.

Treatment:

In the early stages treatment is most effective with antibiotics applied to the affected eye. We recommend Opticlox eye ointment®. There is no withholding period for this preparation and whilst it may contain the same antibiotics as some intramammary preparations, mastitis tubes should never be used in the eye. If an ulcer develops the eyelids may need to be stitched together to promote healing - this is effective if done at the correct stage, so please get a vet to examine these animals before the eye becomes too badly damaged. Some eyes will become infected (discharge is yellow) and some will become so damaged that the eye may rupture and require removal.

Whilst there is a vaccine available in New Zealand it is not registered for use in Australia and importation of such overseas products is illegal. Smithton Vet Service has been involved in sampling cases of pink eye and several variants of the causative bacteria have been isolated. It is hoped that as a result of this testing here and on the mainland, that a vaccine suitable for Australian strains and conditions will be available in the not too distant future. Until then, *early detection and treatment is the most effective way of controlling this disease*. Prevention by minimising mustering or movement of stock through dusty yards and isolation of cases will also decrease the spread of pink eye through your herd.