



Lice infestation causes great concern for cattle farmers in Ireland. Heavy lice burdens reduce the welfare of animals as the parasite causes intense itching. Lice infestation also reduces productivity in animals as a reduction in feed intake is often seen. Pay attention of signs of lice bothering cattle at housing as parasites like lice can spread quickly through sheds with animals stocked in close proximity. Lice treatment is usually carried out at housing but repeat treatment is necessary in many cases as it is possible that cattle will get another infestation as larvae eggs hatch again.

Lice lifecycle

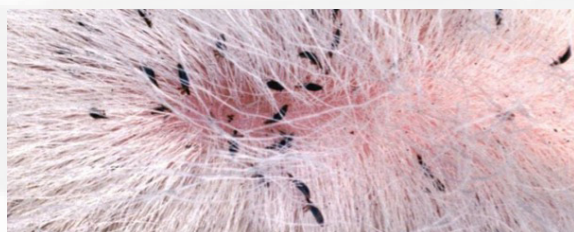
The adult louse will lay eggs on cattle which will stick to the hair. These eggs will then hatch into the nymph stage. The size of the lice increases through a series of nymphal moults until the adult stage is reached. All of these stages occur simultaneously on cattle.

When do lice cause a problem?

Lice cannot survive for more than three to five days without cattle to feed from. Generally the worst times for lice are late winter and early spring. When animals are housed over winter lice can easily spread from animal to animal. Over winter, the hair will grow longer allowing them somewhere to hide from the elements.

Over summer numbers tend to stay low as less direct contact occurs between animals and a thin coat exposes lice to high temperatures and direct sunlight which they find disadvantageous.

Clinical signs:



- Hair loss
- Intense itching
- Rubbing, licking & tail swishing
- Inflamed skin
- Anaemia from sucking lice, e.g. pale gums (young animals).

Diagnosis

When dealing with lice infestation in cattle it's important to differentiate between biting lice and sucking lice as treatment strategies may vary; however, most topical lice treatments will tackle both. Diagnosis is done by visual inspection of the cattle. Conducting three or four hair partings in four places on the body is recommended – neck, sides, backline and rump. Biting Lice will look like small brown spots moving around the skin, while Sucking Lice will look black on the skin of the cattle. The best place to find lice is outside the bald spots in the surrounding hair.

Treatment

Lice infestations will have major effect on thrive or growth rates, if numerous cattle are affected, then all animals must be treated in that shed on the same day (not few days apart). Even if only one pen seems to be affected, all animals should be treated. Lice spread through direct contact, if only some of the animals are treated, the non-treated animals will continue to carry lice and give it back to treated animals after some time. There are some lice only treatments available, which come in pour on and injectable versions.

Damp, dirty, matted hair on cattle gives lice perfect cover to multiply. Therefore, clipping cattle along the back. Neck, head and tail can help reduce the burden of lice, as there is less cover for them.

Always read the label to ensure that you are treating the correct parasite, applying the product correctly, know the retreatment time, calibrate the applicator and the withdrawal period. Call in to your local Bandon Co-op retail store to explore the various solutions and product offers available.