

New Forest Eye is usually seen during the summer months as the bacteria that causes it (*Moraxella bovis*) is primarily spread by flies- although it can also transmit directly between animals at feed faces and troughs. We have noticed a high number of cases this year, most likely associated with the hot dry weather we have been experiencing. Whilst the presence of the bacteria alone is enough to cause New Forest Eye, any factors which impair the health of the eye surface will increase the likelihood of disease; such as:

- Dust
- Ultra-violet light
- Tiny eye abrasions caused by spiky forage or pasture
- High winds



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Cattle will build immunity to *Moraxella bovis*, which is why youngstock are more commonly affected. Therefore vaccination is an effective option for control.

How to spot it

Affected cattle are usually noticed with excessive tear production and squinting, particularly in bright light. On closer inspection you may see...

- Red, inflamed inner eyelids
- Cloudy then pink discolouration of the eye
- Ulcer (wound) on the eye surface
- Pus coming from around the eye

TOP TIP: The disease does not always affect both eyes, so if you are running cattle through a race, make sure you are inspecting both eyes.



Affected cattle are often first noticed with excessive tear staining and squinting.



As the disease progresses, redness and cloudiness can be seen.

Ulceration in an advanced case of New Forest Eye - this can lead to eyeball rupture.



How to prevent cases

- **Fly treatment:** Pour-on products such as those containing deltamethrin can reduce fly numbers around cattle
- **Fly control:** Avoid grazing around high risk areas such as muck heaps or low lying, sheltered, wet areas. Remove nearby carrion as these will be a prime breeding ground for flies. Flies reproduce in faecal pats so by regularly rotating grazing you will reduce the fly burden on your cows
- **'Friendly flies':** These are flies which our vet-techs can come out and release in high fly-risk areas of your farm. They feed on the larvae of problem flies therefore reducing fly numbers. If you have to graze cattle near to muck heaps, this can be a handy option
- **Vaccination:** MAXI/GUARD® Pinkeye Bacterin. A single 2ml injection in stock over 2 months of age, given a month before the onset of disease usually occurs. Covers for 1 year. Can also be used during an outbreak to shorten the duration of the disease, increase healing time, reduce the size of the scar and help prevent subsequent spread in the herd
- **Reduce direct head-to-head contact** by increasing feed space and trough provision
- **Reduce eye damage** by avoiding dusty conditions or feeding spiky forage/grazing
- **Isolate infected animals** to reduce spread

The bacteria is readily spread by flies.



Treatment

Once the disease progresses to causing cloudiness, discolouration and ulceration, the eye can be permanently damaged. In severe cases, the eye may be lost. Therefore prompt treatment is key.

Treatment is with antibiotics, given either as a topical eye ointment or an injection into the muscle which is then excreted into the tears. A vet can also administer antibiotics directly into the eyelid, which vastly reduces the amount of antibiotic required (this is an off-license treatment).

New Forest Eye is extremely painful and associated with inflammation, therefore all cases should be given a **Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory** medication alongside antibiotics. If possible, house affected animals in a dark shed as sunlight is incredibly painful to affected eyes.

Response to treatment should be seen within 48-72 hours; the antibiotic and Metacam may need to be repeated in this time. If no improvement has been seen then contact your vet.

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