



## **Pinkeye – have you considered vaccination?**

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Pinkeye, blight or Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (IBK) is an eye infection seen in cattle caused by the bacteria *Moraxella bovis*. Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) estimates that pinkeye costs Australian beef farmers \$23.5 million annually in lost production and treatment costs.

The bacteria is shed in secretions from the eyes and nose of carrier animals and may be transmitted to other animals by flies. There are a number of factors which can predispose to pinkeye including:

- Long grass/thistles which can cause physical damage to the eye
- Dust – irritates the eye, increasing tear production which attracts flies
- Ultraviolet light – sensitises the eye
- Pigmentation – animals which lack pigment around the eye are more susceptible
- Yard weaning – through crowding, exposure to dust and stress.

Once animals have been exposed to pinkeye they become immune, therefore it is much more likely to see young stock affected than adult stock.

Prevention of pinkeye centres on minimising risk factors, and includes:

- Reducing fly numbers using a registered fly control product
- Avoiding yarding stock in dusty, dry conditions
- Encouraging dung beetles which bury the dung in which flies breed
- Controlling thistles.

Piliguard is a vaccine for pinkeye manufactured by Coopers®. It is designed to reduce the incidence and severity of pinkeye in cattle by stimulating immunity. It is important to remember that cases of pinkeye may still be seen in vaccinated animals, though significantly fewer cases should be seen and those cases will be far less severe. The vaccine is a single dose of 2mls given by injection under the skin or into the muscle in the neck and may be given at the same time as 5-in-1 or 7-in-1 vaccines. It is recommended that the vaccine be given three to six weeks prior to the onset of the pinkeye season and may be given to calves from as young as one week of age. A booster every 12 months is recommended. Vaccination may be targeted toward young calves and replacements as the disease is much more prevalent in these classes of stock.

For more information on pinkeye or vaccination programs contact the District Veterinarian at your local LHPA office.