

Buying in Cattle

Many livestock diseases come either over the fence or on the back of a truck. Luckily there are many things producers can do to reduce the risk of disease entry. Maintaining good boundary fences and even considering double fencing between neighbours is one simple tool.

Considering which area you will source your cattle from is particularly important to reduce the risk of disease. Buying local cattle can sometimes be safer. Cattle from the Tablelands, Western NSW or Southern NSW are not used to our climatic conditions, parasites, germs and pastures. It has long been recognised that western cattle have a “set back” when brought to the coast while coastal cattle can thrive when moved out of area. Outside cattle may not be immune to diseases such as Three Day Sickness, Akabane and Theileriosis which can lead to severe illness and deaths. The purchasing of unjoined heifers at a time so that they will spend at least one full summer on the coast before joining is one safer strategy if you want to buy out of area cattle. Also consider the use of 3 day sickness vaccine, especially for bulls. Introduced cattle may be more prone to poisonous plants on your property because they have not “grown up with them”. Attempt to place introduced cattle in the cleanest paddocks you have.

Whether cattle are bought locally or from out of the area you should only purchase stock from trusted sources and insist on a National Vendor Declaration/Cattle health declaration and treatment history. Diseases such as Bovine Johne’s disease (BJD) can be a local risk. It is generally wise for beef producers to avoid the purchase of dairy cows and to set up their herds so that they qualify as “Beef Only”. This will give you a market advantage in trading cattle to Queensland and within NSW. For more information about “Beef Only” you can contact your local LHPA office.

For any cattle you buy the lowest risk cattle are those from Johnes Disease Market Assurance (MAP) herds. These herds will have a Monitored Negative (MN) status of MN1, MN2 or MN3 with MN3 the lowest risk. Of increasing risk compared to MAP herds are those with “beef only”, check tested or non-assessed status.

Once your new cattle are on your property you should check them for ticks and lice and record their NLIS ear tag numbers either electronically or by hand. If there are old buffalo fly tags these should be removed. If possible it is recommended that newly purchased stock are kept isolated from the rest of your herd/s for about 2 weeks. During this time you should watch for signs of disease. To prevent the introduction of resistant worms it is good practice to “quarantine” drench cattle on arrival. This is achieved by using a macrocyclic lactone drench and a BZ type drench and keeping these cattle fed in yards for a few days. If you do this it can be an ideal opportunity to “train” wilder cattle. It also allows seeds from unwanted plants and weeds to be passed in faeces into your yards and not onto your pasture. If the cattle may have come from an area with fluke they should be drenched with a product active against both adult and immature fluke. If vaccination status is uncertain any introduced cattle between 8 weeks of age and 2 years of age should be vaccinated with 5 in 1 or 7 in 1.

Further activities are needed to reduce the risk from diseases such as vibriosis and pestivirus. Both these diseases can cause significant fertility problems. Ideally you should only buy bulls which have

been tested for pestivirus and vaccinated against vibriosis. The vaccination of bulls and cows on arrival may be necessary to prevent vibriosis. You can also easily test cattle for pestivirus.

It is the responsibility of cattle buyers to transfer the identification of cattle to their NLIS database account if this has not been done by your agent. You should always retain the vendor declaration or post sale summary.

All weaned animals less than 20months of age will need to continue with a worm drenching program every 3-4months. Adult cattle are not likely to need worm drenching after a “quarantine” drench unless they show signs of weight loss or scour. Cattle of all ages will need appropriate fluke drenching if you live in a fluke area.

More information on diseases mentioned in this article can be found at:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/beef>

You can contact your local North Coast LHPA office if you need more advice on appropriate animal health programs for new stock. If you would like to receive livestock health news from the North Coast LHPA by email simply send an email address to matthew.ball@lhpa.org.au. In your email indicate your main interest such as beef cattle, dairy cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, alpaca or wildlife.