Facial Eczema (FE) is a disease which causes lowered production, skin irritation and peeling and sometimes death.

Facial eczema is caused by a toxin (sporidesmin) produced by the spores of the fungus Pithomyces chartarum growing on pasture. The fungus grows in the dead litter at the base of pasture in warm moist conditions.

Sporidesmin, when ingested by stock, damages the liver and bile ducts.

The damaged liver cannot rid the body of wastes and a breakdown product of chlorophyll builds up in the blood causing sensitivity to sunlight, which in turn causes inflammation of the skin.

Contact Us

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Signs to look for

- a drop in milk production, growth rates
- animals are restless, head shaking, seeking shade and lick themselves
- exposed unpigmented or thin skin reddens, thickens and peels

Not all animals affected with FE show physical signs (i.e. clinical FE) although liver damage (i.e. subclinical FE) has occurred. It is estimated that for every clinical case there will be 10 animals with subclinical FE. Blood tests can be used to monitor the extent of subclinical FE.

Badly damaged liver tissue will not regenerate. Chronic wasting and/or death may occur at the time of damage or months later when the animal is under stress (e.g. calving or lambing).

Timing

The fungus produces spores when grass minimum temperatures are above 12°C for two or three nights and humidity is high (usually January to May).

The fungus grows on soft litter at the base of the pasture so hard grazing during danger periods increases the risk of spore intake as does topping which increases the build-up of soft litter.

Prevention

There is no cure for FE so prevention is the only way of protecting animals. To be effective, preventative measures need to be in place before eczema spores are found.

Preventative measures include monitoring pasture spore count and either dosing animals with zinc or spraying pastures with a fungicide.

Breeding animals that are more tolerant to facial eczema is a solution to reduce the impact from facial eczema in the long term.

CHB VETS LTD

Veterinary newsletter January 2020

Grass seed invasion

With the growing conditions ideal for grass, there is plenty around to cause problems. These seeds have the ability to get in through the skin and cause a nasty infection as they track inwards. They also get into eyes, ears and any other opening they can find.

When seeds get into these places they burrow in deeply and can cause ear drum rupture, blindness or a life threatening infection. Removal involves sedation or even a full anaesthetic and surgery, depending on where the seed ends up and sometimes we never find the seed.

Check paws, ears, and armpits regularly after walks to catch the seeds before they break the skin. A suddenly droopy ear, head shaking, swollen weepy paws or a closed eye can be a sign that a barley grass has gone astray.

These seeds have hundreds of tiny barbs which means once they get in through the skin they can only move forwards and will keep travelling through the body. Finding the seed can be like looking for a needle in a haystack as they have often moved on by the time we get to treat the animal.

Prevention involves avoiding areas where these seeds are found if possible. Unfortunately long seedy grass is widespread in Hawkes Bay and becomes seedy as soon as the weather starts to dry off. Clipping the coat of long haired dogs will help you see the grass seeds before they break the skin and will help keep the dog cooler in the summer.

If you suspect your animal may have a grass seed in it, please bring it in to be checked as soon as possible to help make removal that much easier.

Happy New Year
to you all.

We look forward to continuing to help you out with your animals in 2020.

Cattle Ticks and You

Ticks have been present in parts of Central Hawkes Bay for many years. In more recent years, the occurrence of infestations affecting all species seems to have increased. Changes in local climate and stock movements are the most likely causes. Awareness has further been heightened by the emergence of the tick borne protozoan disease, Theileria.

Ticks are blood sucking external parasites. The common cattle tick, *Haemaphysalis longicornis,* favours cattle but they are not completely host specific and can infest deer, sheep, goats, humans, horses, rabbits, hares and domestic pets. This type of tick, is the only one found in New Zealand. It is called a three host tick, with each of its growing stages - larvae, nymph, and adult feeding off separate hosts, not necessarily of the same species.

The adult female tick, which when fully engorged with blood can grow to approximately 9mm long by 7mm wide, lays hundreds of eggs from which the larvae will hatch on nearby vegetation. The larvae attach to a suitable host and feed before falling to the pasture where they develop to a nymph stage. Nymphs will also attach to a host to feed before detaching and developing into an adult. The time taken for the completion of the life cycle varies considerably from days to months depending on factors such as temperature and the host's immunity developed from previous exposure.

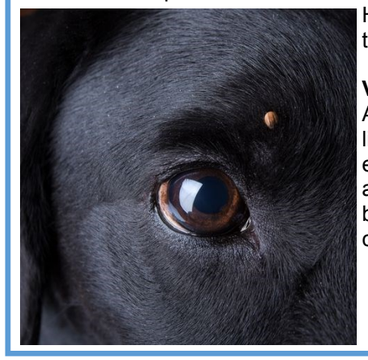
The larvae and nymphal stages of the life cycle position themselves at the tips of long grass or vegetation and attach to the skin of grazing animals or hosts walking through the paddocks.

Ticks are obvious on clinical observation and are commonly found on the head, ears, udder and lower body extremities.

PASTURE MANAGEMENT
Ticks can live without a blood meal for over a year, so leaving pasture un-grazed and hoping the ticks will die from lack of food isn't a very practical option. If you have poorly-drained pasture, your animals are more at risk from picking up ticks, as this is a good habitat for them. It may be best to fence off those areas. Even on well-drained pasture, ticks can hide in the long grass, so topping can help remove their preferred habitat of damp pasture and moist soil. However, it won't affect the eggs.
Heavy grazing by adult cattle and sheep, pugging up the ground, can help destroy eggs but can't be used farm-wide all at once unless you then destock for a time to allow regrowth.

TICK REMOVAL
For single animals, you can pick ticks off your animals, but it's messy and often when you pull a tick off, its mouthparts are left inside the skin of the animal, which may cause irritation or even an infection. You can daub them with methylated spirits or tea-tree oil and they will eventually release, but they may still scatter their eggs when they hit the ground.
Chemical products include insecticides like Ripcord and Permoxin for horses, and specialist pour-ons and dips for sheep, deer and cattle (Bayticol pour-on). In cats and dogs, Frontline, Seresto, Nexgard and Bravecto will kill ticks.
Bayticol pour-on is a well known and reliably performing chemical and should be applied from August on to eliminate the early infestations and reduce the build up that will occur with delaying your first application. Interval between applications is 8 weeks and should be combined with good husbandry as mentioned below.

GOOD ANIMAL HUSBANDRY
Ticks are most noticeable and most prevalent from October to February, but early applications will have a significant reduction in summer populations. While chemical products will remove ticks to bring the population down, other extra effort will be required.



Hares, rabbits and wild goats and deer are all implicated in the spread of ticks, so if they are a problem in a known tick area, they will help continue the spread.

VETERINARY RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS FOR MANAGEMENT
At CHB Vets we recommend using Bayticol for Prevention and Treatment on your livestock. We also recommend a tick treatment for your working dogs and pets to ensure the tick management program is complete. We have a variety of treatments available from Seresto Collars providing 8 months tick and flea treatment, to chewables like Nexgard which is a monthly chewable treatment providing tick, mite and flea control.

Cat Bite abscess

A common problem in cats is the so called "Cat Bite Abscess" – occurring all year around but we mostly see it through the summer months when Tomcats wander through the neighbourhood and your pet cat is trying to defend his/her property.

The reason why these cat bites/scratches tend to go nasty is because of their small entry wound – which leaves the bacteria of teeth and claws deep in the tissue – causing painful muscle cellulitis – on the legs - or if the wound closes quickly and there is loose skin - often on head,neck - the enclosed bacteria are situated in the perfect environment to multiply and form an abscess over the next 2-4 days.

Often you may not even realise what the actual problem is – in a lot cases Owners bring their cats in with following problems – which can be caused by cat bites:

- Lame on one or more legs
- Swollen leg or face
- Doesn't want to be touched in one specific area
- Lethargic , flat
- Stops eating

And as varied the presentation can be – as different can the bite/scratch turn out- which also depends on the stage the cat is being brought in and the location of the wound. These wounds are very painful and treatment is needed to reduce this.

Not all cat bites will lead to an abscess – and not all Cat abscesses are caused by a cat bite – there can be many other causes such as barley grass, foreign body reaction etc.

Overall – bring your cat in if you are concerned in any way! A swollen leg may not seem that threating at first – but if an infection is missed and leads to a systemic sepsis – your cat may decline to eat and drink and it can become fatal. And as there are many other causes of swollen legs, and lumps and bumps on your cat it is hard for us to give you advice on the phone – so bring your cat in and lets us give them a proper check over.