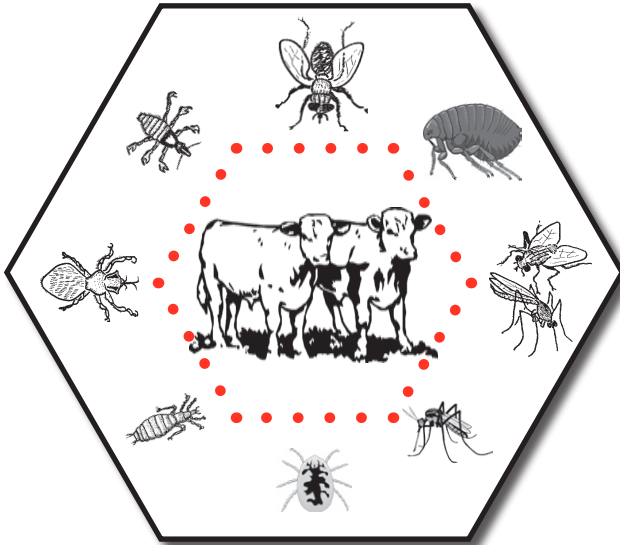


EXTERNAL PARASITES OF CATTLE



JENNY TURTON



agriculture

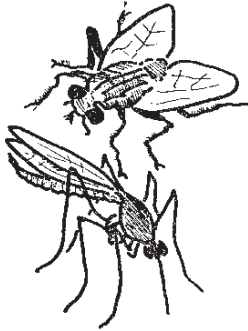
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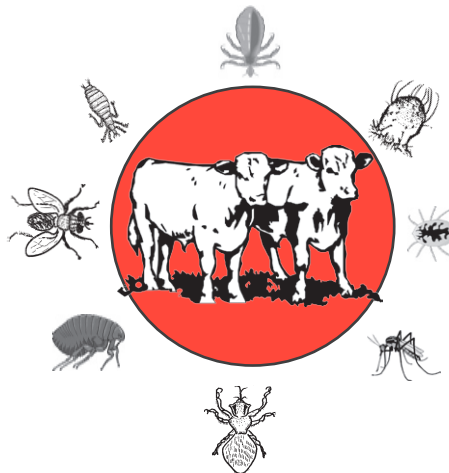
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EXTERNAL PARASITES OF CATTLE

- External parasites live on the skin of cattle or visit them to feed.
- The most important groups are flies and ticks.
- Lice and mites are usually not very important, but do occur occasionally.
- Most of these parasites can be seen with the eye alone, although for mites you need to look through a microscope.

Why are external parasites important?

- Some are just a nuisance to the animals.
- Some cause skin and eye irritation and damage, which can lead to bacterial infection and fly maggot attack.
- Some create large wounds.
- Others suck blood, causing the animals to become weak.
- Some can spread diseases between animals.
- Some can cause disease through poisonous bites (toxins).
- All of this can result in decreased production and even death.

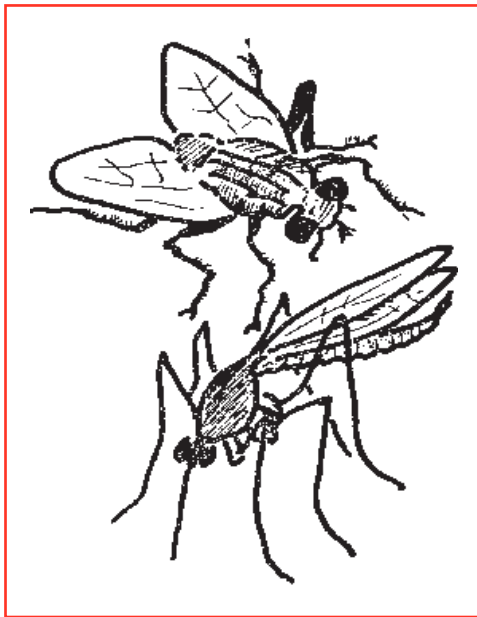


FLIES

- Flies are most active in the rainy season and warm months.
- There are many types of flies.
- Some are biting flies, others are important because they lay eggs on animals, while others irritate the animals.

Biting flies

- There are many biting flies and these include blackflies, biting midges, mosquitoes, stable flies, horseflies and tsetse flies.
- Some flies, such as blackflies, mosquitoes and midges attack animals in swarms.
- These flies suck blood and cause irritation, painful bites and blood loss.
- Many of these can also spread diseases among animals, such as gall-sickness (horseflies); three-day stiffness (biting midges and mosquitoes); lumpy-skin disease (biting flies); Rift Valley fever (mosquitoes); nagana (tsetse flies); pinkeye (face flies).



Flies which cause fly strike

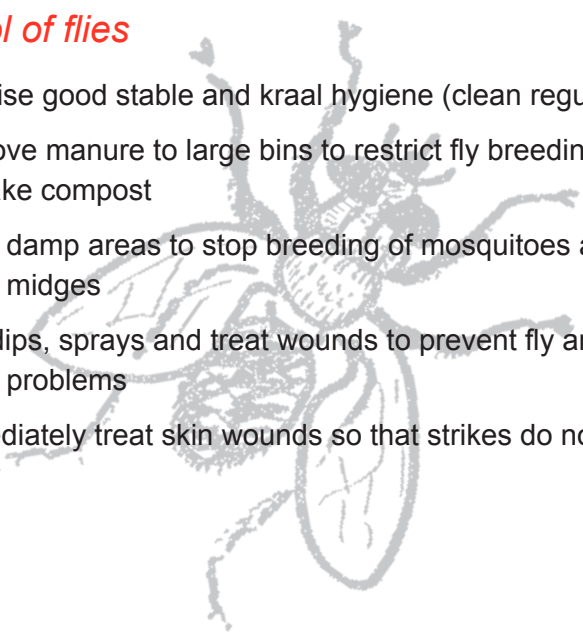
- Other flies (blowflies and screw-worm flies) are important because they lay their eggs on animals
- The eggs hatch into larvae (maggots) and can cause severe injuries to animals
- The condition caused by maggots living on animals is called fly strike
- Tick bites and cuts can become infested with blowflies or screwworm. This can lead to severe wounds and even death

Treatment of fly strike

- Clip and clean coat around the area affected, remove maggots and treat with insecticidal cream, powder or spray. The animals may need treatment with antibiotics

Control of flies

- Practise good stable and kraal hygiene (clean regularly)
- Remove manure to large bins to restrict fly breeding and to make compost
- Drain damp areas to stop breeding of mosquitoes and biting midges
- Use dips, sprays and treat wounds to prevent fly and strike problems
- Immediately treat skin wounds so that strikes do not occur



TICKS

- There are many different types of ticks.
- Ticks are usually most active during the warmer and wetter parts of the year.
- Ticks suck blood from animals, and large tick numbers can lead to blood loss and weakness.
- Some ticks have long mouthparts and can cause severe skin damage, which can lead to fly strike and bacterial infection.
- Ticks can also spread diseases such as heartwater (bont ticks), redwater (blue ticks), gallsickness (blue ticks) and corridor disease (brown ticks) among animals.
- Some ticks (Karoo paralysis tick, glossy brown tick) can cause paralysis as a result of the toxins they produce.
- Other ticks (small smooth bontlegged tick) can also cause sweating sickness as a result of the toxins they produce.

Treatment of tick damage

- Clean the wound, treat with an insecticidal-disinfectant combination to heal the wound and to keep flies away. Antibiotics may be needed.

Control of ticks

- Control is by acaricides which are chemicals that kill ticks or prevent their attachment. They can be used as sprays (handsprays or race-sprays), dips, pour-ons, spot treatment or injectable drugs
- Some breeds of cattle are more resistant to ticks and tick-borne diseases
- It is best to get advice from your state veterinarian or animal health technician on control methods for ticks in your area.

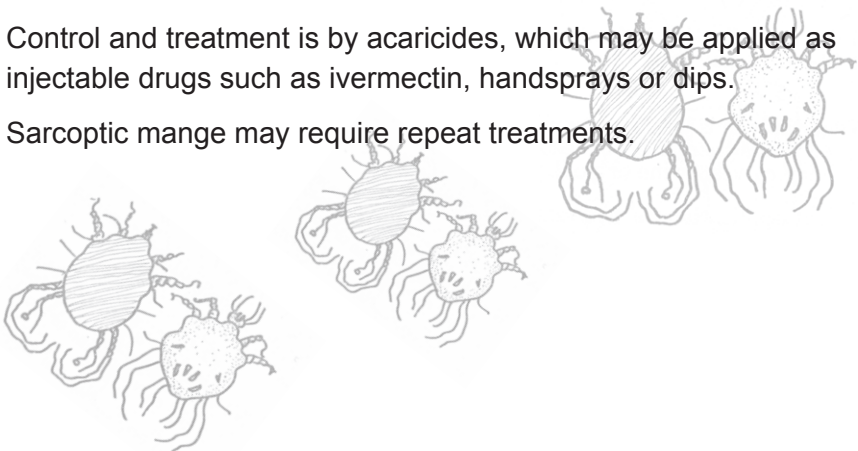


MITES

- Mites are very small, and can usually not be seen with the naked eye.
- Mites live on the animal for the entire lifecycle and are spread among animals by close contact.
- They cause skin irritation, which leads to rubbing, scratching and hair loss; this is called mange.
- Irritation from mites is usually seen on the head, neck and legs. It is associated with crowded conditions and poor husbandry.
- There are different types of mange, depending on the type of mite involved: sarcoptic mange, demodectic mange, chorioptic mange and psoroptic mange.
- Skin disease with irritation, scratching, rubbing and biting should always make one suspect mange or lice.
- Because it is impossible or very difficult to see the mites with the naked eye, diagnosis is by skin scrapings and looking for mites under the microscope.

Control and treatment of mites

- Control and treatment is by acaricides, which may be applied as injectable drugs such as ivermectin, handsprays or dips.
- Sarcoptic mange may require repeat treatments.



LICE

- Lice are wingless. They live exclusively on the skin and cannot survive for long periods off the animals.
- Lice can be seen by parting the hair; you can see them moving and their eggs may be attached to the hair.
- Lice are very specific to the type of animal and will not spread to other animal species. They are spread by contact among animals of the same species.
- There are sucking and biting (chewing) lice.
- Heavy lice infestations can cause irritation and distress. Animals rub and lick themselves, and damage their hides.
- Sucking lice can also cause weakness from blood loss.
- Lice are usually associated with unhealthy livestock in crowded conditions.
- Often heavy lice infestations are secondary to some other disease problem, largely because sick animals do not groom themselves.

Control of lice

- Control by insecticides (dusts, pour-ons, spot treatment, handsprays, dips).

**For further information contact your animal health
technician or veterinarian**

or

***Animal Health for Developing Farmers
ARC-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute
Private Bag X05, Onderstepoort 0110
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or

**The Resource Centre of the Department of Agriculture
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