

The effects of ticks on animals



Ticks are external parasites that live on the skin or the fleece of animals

Why is it important to know about the effects of ticks on animals?

- ◆ **Loss of blood.** Ticks feed on blood. Each tick sucks not less than 30 drops of blood to complete its life cycle. Loss of blood results in retarded growth and loss of weight.
- ◆ **Tick worry.** A tick bite leads to discomfort for the animal. The animal gets irritated and does not eat (graze) well. This will in turn affect its weight gain and milk supply.
- ◆ **Toxins.** The saliva of ticks contains toxins which are released into the body of an animal. This will affect the general health and productivity of the animal.
- ◆ **Wounds.** When ticks attach themselves, their mouthpieces damage the skin and if they detach themselves, they leave wounds through which germs can gain access to the body, bloodstream and cause disease in



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various organs of the body, which will cause diseases in animals. If the animal is slaughtered, the meat may be contaminated and will then be condemned.

- ◇ **Screw-worm strike.** The wound that has been left behind by the ticks usually becomes an ideal site for screw-worm infestation and is very difficult to cure.
- ◇ **Loss of the distal end of the tail.** This results from clusters of tick biting of the tail brush. This loss deprives the animal of the swish with which it whisks off irritating flies and biting insects.
- ◇ **Damage to the hide.** The mouth of the tick pierces through the skin and leaves permanent markings. These markings will affect the value of the hide when being processed for the manufacturing of leather goods.
- ◇ **Diseases.** Many animal diseases are transmitted by ticks, e.g. tick-borne diseases such as theileriosis, heartwater, redwater, gallsickness and sweating diseases in calves.

These are some of the serious diseases caused by ticks or associated with ticks

Diseases	Humans or animals affected
Tick paralysis	Mainly sheep and goats
Spring lamb paralysis	Lambs and sometimes calves
Sweating sickness	Cattle, especially calves
Tick-borne diseases	Cattle, sheep and goats
Tick-bite fever	Man
Tick paralysis	Man

Conclusion

It is very important to prevent animals from being infested with ticks as this may lead to loss of production, poor meat and hide (skin) quality. Infestation may be controlled by the regular dipping of animals and by best agricultural practices in managing veld and grazing rotations. The building and maintenance of dipping tanks or sprays, the labour needed for mustering stock and the purchasing of acaricides for tick control and therapeutic agents add greatly to farmer's production costs.

**Always remember: Prevention is better
than cure**

2008

2004 First print

Compiled by

Directorate Agricultural Information Services, Department of Agriculture

Printed and published by

Department of Agriculture

Obtainable from

Resource Centre, Directorate Agricultural Information Services
Private Bag X144, Pretoria, 0001 South Africa

and on the web at: www.nda.agric.za/publications

