




Media Statement

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Bovine anaemia due to blood parasite detected

Producers are advised that anaemia in cattle due to a blood parasite has recently been confirmed on two South Coastal properties.

Department of Agriculture and Food Veterinary Officer Jennifer Cotter said bovine anaemia caused by a variant of the blood parasite group *Theileria orientalis* was initially identified in the region in April 2013.

This cattle disease has been present in eastern Australia for about 10 years.

The first cases for 2014 have recently been confirmed, coinciding with tick activity and the calving season.

“Testing of samples from late pregnant cows which had aborted calves and died confirmed the disease,” Dr Cotter said.

“Late pregnant and recently calved cows are particularly susceptible to this disease but younger stock can also be affected. The disease typically affects a small number of cattle in a mob.

“Affected cows may appear depressed, show reluctance to move, drool and have laboured breathing following exercise. If producers examine the affected cows in the yard they may have yellow mucous membranes and sometimes red urine.

“The disease only affects cattle and is caused by parasites that destroy red blood cells. DNA testing is used to detect the strains known to cause disease.

“Other diseases can cause similar signs, so testing to confirm the diagnosis is advisable.

“Although there are no registered treatments for the disease, supportive treatment could help and farmers should contact their local veterinarian if they suspect that they have a case.

“Producers should always contact a veterinarian whenever their animals show unusual disease signs, abnormal behaviour or unexpected deaths so that exotic diseases can be ruled out.”

Dr Cotter said the disease was believed to be spread by a specific species of tick, the ‘bush tick’, although cases had occurred where no evidence of tick infestation had been found, and it was possible that other means of spread may occur.

“The bush tick was discovered in the Walpole area in the early 1980s and has been reported in the Denmark area, however its actual distribution is unknown,” she said.

“In order to learn more about bovine anaemia and the distribution of bush tick, producers who find ticks on cattle in the Southern Agricultural Region are asked to submit them to the department’s Albany office for identification and testing.”

More information about bovine anaemia due to infection with *Theileria orientalis* group is available at agric.wa.gov.au.

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