

Livestock need vaccination too!

Vaccinations are not just for our pet cats and dogs. Vaccination against common disease should be thought of as an investment in the health of your herd, not just as an additional expense, and is an essential element of a comprehensive disease prevention program. Prevention of disease is an important part of production animal management and is a far more effective way of reducing production losses than treating disease.

Many widespread and destructive diseases can be prevented or minimised by a regular vaccination programme. Vaccines increase the level of herd immunity and the level of disease resistance in individual animals. However, they do not give 100% protection to every animal vaccinated and are not a substitute for otherwise poor management practices.

This month we will cover some of the vaccines available for cattle. Subsequent articles will cover vaccinations for sheep and for horses.

Cattle Vaccinations

All cattle should be vaccinated against the 5 common clostridial diseases: tetanus, malignant oedema, black disease, enterotoxemia, and blackleg. A separate vaccine is available for botulism, although the key to preventing botulism is through good nutritional management.

Cattle should receive two doses of the “5 in 1” vaccine, 4-6 weeks apart and then a booster 12 months after the initial two doses. For calves, it is recommended that the first dose is given 4-6 weeks before marking and the second dose at marking, then an annual booster 12 months after marking. Following the 12 month booster, immunity against tetanus, malignant oedema and blackleg should be lifelong, however to maintain immunity against black disease, annual boosters each year are required.

More frequent vaccination may be required for enterotoxemia (pulpy kidney) as immunity may only last 3 months. Booster vaccinations for young stock may be required depending on local and seasonal conditions (e.g. lots of lush green feed). It is recommended that a booster should be given if there is likely to be a change in diet (such as commencement of grain feeding).

Leptosporosis, Pestivirus and Vibriosis are diseases that can cause infertility and abortion. In addition, leptosporosis is a zoonotic disease (transmissible from animals to humans). As well as reproductive losses, pestivirus can cause a number of other symptoms such as respiratory disease, diarrhoea and even death.

The leptosporosis vaccine protects against the 2 most common disease strains (*L. hardjo* and *L. pomona*) and can be given in combination with the clostridial disease vaccine (“7 in 1”). Separate vaccines are also available for pestivirus and vibriosis.

Like the human flu vaccine, there is a cattle vaccine available for bovine respiratory disease which tends to be more of a problem with feedlot cattle. There are also vaccines available for some of the common causes of calf scours such as *E. Coli* and *Salmonella*. Vaccines are available for bovine ephemeral fever which we saw in Cowra a couple of years ago (but is mainly found in coastal and northern areas).

If you would like more information about suitable vaccinations for your cattle, please contact the helpful team at Cowra Veterinary Centre.