

THEILERIA AND ANAEMIA IN CATTLE

Theileriosis is a disease in cattle caused by a microscopic blood-borne parasite that is spread by ticks. The causative organism is *Theileria orientalis* (Ikeda strain) and it induces anaemia by destroying red blood cells. It was first seen in New Zealand in 2012 and has since spread to all areas associated with ticks, as well as being seen in infected cattle that have moved to other areas.

There is no risk to humans or any other animals from *Theileria orientalis* (Ikeda).

SIGNS OF ANAEMIA

Clinical signs of anaemia in cattle include lethargy, exercise intolerance and increased respiratory and heart rates. A common sign is to see a few animals lagging behind the herd when mustering or droving, apparently gasping or struggling for breath. Stress and movement of affected animals should be minimised as their reduced capacity to transport oxygen around the body can lead to collapse and death. Animals should be rested, given high quality feed and water, and handled only when absolutely necessary. Movement or yarding should be minimised.

Pay particular attention to young calves and animals under stress such as around calving or weaning.

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New Zealand cattle tick, *Haemaphysalis longicornis*

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

If you suspect your cattle may be infected with *Theileria* consult with your veterinarian. Theileriosis can be diagnosed through blood testing.

Treatment options mainly involve supportive care until the animal's immune system can get the infection under control:

- Minimise movement and stress
- Give affected animals easy to eat, high quality feed and plenty of clean water
- In severe cases a blood transfusion by your vet may save an animal's life

PREVENTION

- Keep cattle in good condition and well fed so they are better able to cope with disease challenges and stressful events.
- Check the health of animals before purchasing or moving them onto your farm.
- Quarantine newly arrived cattle for 7-14 days and give them an effective tick treatment.
- There is no vaccine for *Theileria*.