

Todd Vineyard

Ag. News

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Do You Have Ticks?

Over the past two weeks or so I have witnessed several cases of ticks in cattle in our area. As the Texas starts to have consistently warm weather throughout the state, we see an increased in ectoparasites on cattle and family pets. The most obvious observed on cattle are horn flies and then the return of the pesky house fly in uncontrollable numbers.

But there is one parasite that goes unnoticed far too often and that is the eight-legged tick. Although not technically an insect, these close relatives of insects are blood feeding ectoparasites that can carry diseases and cause anemia in extreme situations.

Ticks are found throughout all of the United States and have population increases from May until October, peaking in the summer months. Both male and female ticks are blood feeders that prefer wildlife but utilize cattle, dogs, cats, rabbits, rodents and even humans for a blood source. The tick lifecycle consists of four distinct stages, egg, nymph, larva and adult. The eggs are laid off the host and in the ground where the very tiny nymphs will emerge. The nymph stage is typically referred to as seed ticks due to their small size and will typically go unnoticed on cattle and pets.

The nymph stage will typically choose a small host, such as rabbit or rodent, to feed on and then they will molt into the larval form. The larva then find a bigger animal host to feed on prior to changing into an adult and finding a much larger animal where the adult ticks will become fully engorged on and a huge nuisance and cause for concern on animals.

The best control measures consist of using integrated pest management techniques that require some hard labor and chemical treatments to obtain the best results. For cattle on pasture, keep the pasture brush cut short to decrease harborage for the ticks when they are off the animals. If possible, move cattle to less tick infested pastures and prevent deer access to cattle pastures. For dogs and cats, prevent then access to high overgrown grass and brush or trim any you have access too.

Chemical options are available for cattle and pets; cattle should be treated as directed with either two insecticide impregnated ear tags or a pour-on product containing a pyrethroid. Dogs and cats should be treated with insecticide impregnated collars or spot-ons labeled for tick control. In addition, when possible, remove ticks with tweezers or fingers buy grabbing as close to the skin as possible to ensure that the mouthparts are removed. If a person is bitten by a tick, remove and preserve the tick in the freezer for up to two weeks just in case they were to become ill. If a

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person becomes after a tick bite, the tick can be submitted for testing.
For more information please call Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Wise County 940-627-3341.

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