



BY RACHEL ENDECOTT, BEEF CATTLE SPECIALIST

# COW SENSE CHRONICLE

## SEPTEMBER 2013

### PINKEYE

Pinkeye has sure been a challenge to cattle producers in our state and nation this summer. In fact, two of my students interned this summer in Russia and cattle there were experiencing bouts of pink-eye as well. It seems we have it on good authority that this was a good year for pinkeye, even from a global perspective!! It's been a very good fly year, which has only intensified the pinkeye problem.

Pinkeye is a common infectious disease affecting the eyes of cattle. Although pinkeye is non-fatal, it has a marked economic impact on the cattle industry. It is known to occur at all seasons of the year and in all breeds of cattle.

A bacteria, *Moraxella bovis*, is the primary infectious agent initiating pinkeye. Factors causing irritation can allow for the invasion of the bacteria and thus, pinkeye formation. These may include excessive sunlight, face, house and stable flies, plant material and dust.

The organism is located in the eye and nasal cavities of infected cattle and secretions from these areas are a source of infection for other cattle. Infected cattle with no symptoms may serve as carriers, and will harbor the bacteria in the nasal cavities for a period that may exceed one year.

Younger cattle are more susceptible to the disease because older cattle have most likely developed protective antibodies on the eye surface as a result of previous exposure. The incubation period is usually 2 to 3 days. Swelling and redness, excessive tearing and squinting are initial clinical signs. Cattle have a decreased appetite due to excessive pain, and a moderate body temperature elevation.

A small opaque area appears in the center of the cornea in about two days and by day six the entire cornea will have a gray-white color with deep central ulceration of the cornea. As the eye begins to heal, white scar tissue infiltrates the cornea. In most cases, the scar tissue will gradually disappear as healing progresses, and vision will be restored.

However, in severely affected eyes, a white scar often persists and interferes with vision. If the ulceration is severe enough to penetrate all layers of cells forming the cornea, the fluid in the eyeball will escape. This results in the iris and/or lens protruding partially or entirely through the ulceration. If this occurs, there will be permanent blindness in the affected eye.

A thorough fly control program is critical to limit the spread of pinkeye in a herd of cattle. Affected cattle can be helped by prompt treatment. Most antibiotics in eye sprays are effective in reducing the infection and may also contain an anesthetic to relieve the intense pain due to infection. These sprays are most effective if applied several times a day, as excessive tearing may wash them out of the eye in a relatively short time.

The pinkeye-causing bacteria is most often susceptible to oxytetracycline, penicillin, and sulfonamides and these may be best courses of treatment for extensively-managed pasture cattle. As always, consult your local veterinarian for assistance in developing treatment plans.

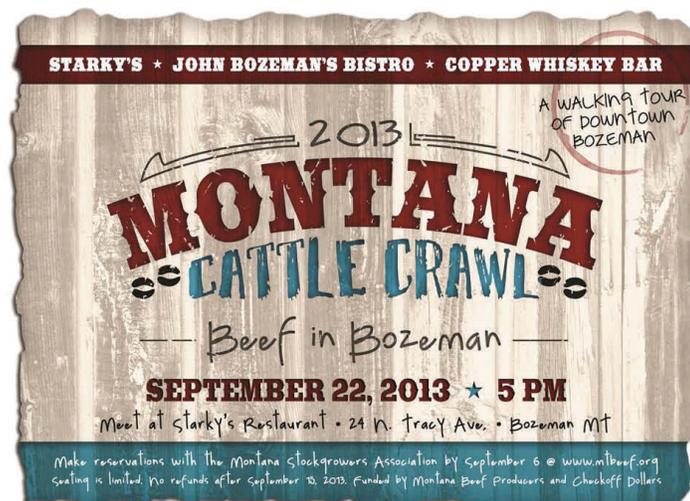
## STEER-A-YEAR PROGRAM RETURNS TO MSU

After a one-year hiatus, the Steer-A-Year program will run again in 2013-14. Donated steers make a direct impact on MSU students, particularly those in the Livestock Judging program. In addition to the judging team, steers donated to SAY make important contributions to the educational experiences of dozens of students in the College of Agriculture. The steers are used in Animal Science courses during both fall and spring semesters, including Beef Cattle Management, Livestock Management – Beef Cattle, Meat Science, and Livestock Evaluation.

Delivery of steers will be taken during the week of October 14-18, 2013. Steers will be housed at the Bozeman Agriculture Research and Teaching Farm. Performance data (28-day gains, carcass) will be sent out to donors as it is collected. Donated steers compete in two contests, the Best Initial Feeder Steer and the Best Carcass. Donors will also be honored at MSU Celebrate Agriculture!! Weekend on October 25-26.

If you'd like more information about the Steer-A-Year program, or would like to donate a steer, please contact Rachel Endecott at (406) 994-3747 or [rachel.endecott@montana.edu](mailto:rachel.endecott@montana.edu).

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Questions for Rachel?  
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# SEPTEMBER 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i> Labor Day	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i> Gallatin Co Carcass Awards, Amsterdam	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i> Helena	<i>11</i> Collegiate Stockgrower Meeting	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i> Miles City	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>22</i> Cattle Crawl	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i> Miles City	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>					