



# BEEF NEW ENGLAND & NORTH WEST SLOPES news

SUMMER 2008

NSW Department of Primary Industries, [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/beefnews](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/beefnews)

A quarterly newsletter for beef producers of the New England and North West Slopes areas of NSW.

## IN THIS EDITION

Getting Pinkeye under control

New Beef cattle Officer for Glen Innes

Maximising Summer Forage Quality

BJD Changes in 2008

New Booklet for Best Practice Husbandry

## CONTACT DETAILS

Alastair Rayner  
District Livestock Officer (Beef Products)  
NSW DPI – Tamworth

Ph: 02-6763 1100  
Fax: 02:6763 1222  
Email:  
[alastair.rayner@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:alastair.rayner@dpi.nsw.gov.au)



NSW DEPARTMENT OF  
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

## Getting Pinkeye under control

*Alastair Rayner, Livestock Officer (Beef Products) Tamworth*

**P**inkeye is unfortunately a common condition experienced in many herds. Without doubt Pinkeye is painful, debilitating and can cause serious production losses. While commonly known as Pinkeye, the condition is described as Infectious Kerato – conjunctivitis (IBK) and is a bacterial infection that causes inflammation which may lead to temporary or permanent blindness.

The common cause of Pinkeye is the bacteria known as *Moraxella bovis* which when it attacks the eye releases a toxin. This toxin attacks the cornea and the surrounding membrane, often eroding the surface of the eye and causing inflammation.

As many producers know, Pinkeye can spread rapidly through a herd, and in severe cases, up to 80% of a mob can be affected. The bacteria is often spread by flies, however other factors which can make the spread of the bacteria occur easily include dust, physical irritation (eg from thistles) and bright sunlight.

Controlling Pinkeye is often a difficult task. In hot dusty conditions, mustering cattle to treat Pinkeye may actually make the problem worse. As with many

animal diseases, preventing the disease before it takes hold is a key task for cattle producers.

Factors to consider should be controlling the fly population. Flies can be controlled through good manure management in yards, as well as using fly traps around yards and encouraging dung beetle populations to establish. This may mean carefully considering the use and timing of chemical drenches.

Cooper's Animal Health has released pinkeye vaccine, Piliguard. The new vaccine is available through veterinarians and rural stores. The Piliguard vaccine can help reduce pinkeye at weaning and will be most effective if given to calves during mid to late spring - about 3-6 weeks before the expected onset of the pinkeye season.

It can be used in all classes of beef and dairy cattle, from one week of age. The vaccination has a nil milk and meat withholding period and a nil export slaughter interval. It retails for \$3.50 per dose excluding GST.

Conventional treatments for Pinkeye have relied upon eye ointments and

---

patches. In extreme cases veterinarian assistance may be required to treat the eye.

While many producers are excited about the potential the new Piligaurd vaccine offers, it is important to recognise Pinkeye will best be controlled through a combination of factors. These include minimising flies, dust and the potential for eye irritation through injuries such as thistle or stubble scratches. Longer term producers should remember to select breeding cattle with good eye placement, eye hooding and pigmentation as this can also help reduce the susceptibility of the herd to Pinkeye.



Early stage of pinkeye in a Hereford calf. Tears are often the first sign.



The cornea becomes cloudy and a white spot can appear in the centre.

For more detailed information on managing Pinkeye in your herd, download NSW DPI Prime fact *Pinkeye in cattle*:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/health/specific/cattle/pinkeye-cattle>

---

## New livestock officer takes up duties at Glen Innes

The Northern Tablelands has a new NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) beef cattle officer now that Matthew McKiernan has taken up duties at the Glen Innes Agricultural Research & Advisory Station.

Mr McKiernan, who commenced duties on November 26, will be responsible for providing beef industry extension services in the Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Guyra and Inverell local government areas.

He replaces Alastair Rayner, who moved to Tamworth.

NSW DPI's Manager Extensive Livestock Industry Development, Gary Want, said Matthew McKiernan has a strong background in the cattle industry and brings a broad range of skills to the position.

"Mr McKiernan managed a beef cattle property after completing a degree in Agricultural Science followed by a post graduate Diploma in Education at Charles Sturt University," Mr Want said.

"He spent over three years as a territory sales manager for a machinery company before making the move to NSW DPI to manage performance recording for the Australian Dohne Breeder's Association of Australia.

"However, he had already set his sights on becoming a beef cattle officer and put the effort into achieving this goal including helping to run a family beef cattle enterprise."

Mr Want said Mr McKiernan had been working closely with other beef cattle officers throughout the State since being appointed to Glen Innes in August.

"The practical experience and knowledge gained from experienced staff is invaluable

and has prepared him well for his new role," he said.

"His extension skills were recently put to the test as part of the community education team for the equine influenza outbreak and he also ran a successful field day for beef cattle producers at Glen Innes this month.

"I have every confidence he will do an excellent job as an extension specialist for the beef cattle industry on the Northern Tablelands."

Mr McKiernan, who moved from Blayney with his family to take up the position, said he was keen to meet local cattle producers and to work with them to implement new practices based on research to boost the productivity and profits from their beef business.

Matthew McKiernan can be contacted at the NSW DPI's office on:

Phone: 6730 1900

Mobile 0400 351 866

E-mail: [matt.mckiernan@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:matt.mckiernan@dpi.nsw.gov.au)





## Editorial

*Alastair Rayner, Livestock Officer (Beef Products) Tamworth*

**W**elcome rain has fallen across most of Northern NSW in the past few weeks. It's been a long time since many of the creeks and rivers have had such good flows or to see flood warnings regularly feature in the news. While much of the rain is accompanied by some destructive storms, I hope the rain brings increased opportunities for beef production in 2008.

**A**nimal health programs form a major part of the annual calendar for all cattle producers. However when considering animal health it's important not to focus only on the treatment of a disease. As highlighted in the article on Pinkeye, addressing the factors which contribute to the spread of the disease are just as important, if not more so than treating the disease when it occurs. If you would like advice on designing a program for disease prevention please contact a NSW DPI Livestock Officer. .

**T**he appointment of Matt McKiernan to the Glen Innes district provides beef producers with further access to advice and assistance with their programs. Matt is keen to start a number of activities, and I certainly am looking forward to working with him in the future.

## Coming Events

### Beef-n-omics

Beef-n-omics continues to attract new producers who wish to undertake a specific beef oriented course. If you are interested in Beef-n-omics two courses are planned for later this year, which depending on demand will be around Tamworth and Inverell. If you are interested please contact the Tamworth office of NSW DPI on 02-6763 1100

---

## Summer Forages – Maximising Quality

*Loretta Serafin, District Agronomist, Tamworth, NSW Department of Primary Industries*

The recent run of storm rainfall events has provided significant benefits to the many summer forage crops sown around the region. Those who have been under the right cloud have witnessed rapid growth rates in their forage crops as a result of the combination of warm temperatures and a good supply of moisture.

The forage sorghums appear to still be the most popular summer forage, so a few pointers will help maintain quality feed for livestock in the coming months. Grazing of forage sorghums should commence when the plants have reached at least 80cm -1m in height. At this point the “optimum” has been reached, that is optimal quality combined with a bulk quantity and a reduced risk of prussic acid issues.

With good growing conditions it can be expected that many of the forages will be growing up to 5cm (2 inches) or more per day. As such in one week the crop can nearly double in height within 1-2 weeks.

On the down side as growth continues above the initial grazing height of 0.8m the quality will decline. Research has shown that protein (%) and metabolisable energy (Mj/kg) will decline as forage sorghum becomes increasingly taller and ranker when compared to testing at a height of 0.6m.

A limited number of hybrids such as sugargraze will show an increase in energy

once the plant reaches above 2m, but the protein content continues to decline, however this is the exception.

If sufficient stock is not on hand to keep the feed at its best quality then other options for conserving feed such as cutting for hay or silage should be considered. However the same principles apply as for grazing as leaving the crop until it is too tall will mean poorer quality hay as the protein and energy contents drop away.

Consideration of the weather conditions during baling are also important as the moisture will need to be reduced to between 15-20% to allow baling and safe storage. This requires several days of fine, sunny weather which may be a challenge during the storm months.

If grazing is carried out then consider leaving at least 15cm of the plant intact to help facilitate faster regrowth, this will allow a second and sometimes a third grazing or cutting if the season allows.

---

## Buyer Beware – Important Changes to BJD Rules from 31 March 2008

Sally Spence, Technical Specialist Product Integrity, NSW DPI

NSW BJD rules change on 31 March 2008. These changes affect both dairy and beef herds.

### The Changes:

- No quarantines apply to **dairy herds** which are infected with BJD or are suspected of being infected with BJD after 31 March 2008.
- Dairy producers selling or moving cattle in NSW are required to provide a Dairy BJD Assurance Score Declaration Form except when the cattle are being sold directly to an abattoir or at a slaughter-only sale.
- At saleyards the Dairy Score is displayed on the pens of cattle from dairy holdings and the auctioneer announces the Dairy Score prior to selling the cattle. Cattle from dairy herds with a Dairy Score of less than 7 are held in a segregated area of the saleyard.
- Cattle from dairy holdings in the Control Zone can be moved directly to dairy holdings in the Protected Zone. However to move cattle from dairy holdings in the Control Zone to beef properties or saleyards in the Protected Zone, the dairy cattle have to meet standard inter-zone movement requirements i.e. they are enrolled in CattleMAP or have been Check Tested.
- Movements of cattle from dairy herds to beef herds are monitored by NLIS.
- Beef producers who purchase dairy cattle with a Dairy Score of 6 or below and whose herds become infected with BJD

are not eligible for the Financial and Non-Financial Assistance Package for beef herds.

### Not Changing:

- BJD Control and Protected Zones in NSW remain in place and cattle (other than steers) moving from a Control Zone to the Protected Zone must meet certain movement conditions. These conditions include requiring the cattle to have a higher BJD status (e.g. CattleMAP, *Beef Only* or Check Tested negative), be accompanied by a declaration form and meet NLIS requirements\*. Steers may move between Zones. See the DPI web site or contact the District Veterinarian at your local Rural Lands Protection Board for details.
- Beef herds infected or suspected of being infected with BJD remain in quarantine. The Financial and Non-Financial Assistance Package provides support for these herds as producers eliminate BJD from their herds.
- *Beef Only* conditions and audit requirements continue unchanged.

### Implications for cattle producers:

After 31 March 2008 it will be up to you to protect your own herd from Johnes disease.

**Always ASK for the BJD status or Dairy Score BEFORE you buy cattle** whether trade cattle, replacements or bulls. Get your Agent or Buyer to ask for the BJD status or Dairy Score or do it yourself.

---

**BJD is much more common in dairy and dairy cross herds than in pure beef herds.**

- **CattleMAP Herds-MN1, MN2 and MN3** have the highest Dairy Score (8, 9 & 10) and are the lowest risk.
- **Beef Only** is a low cost way to reduce risk and maximise market options. To maintain *Beef Only* status introduced dairy cattle must be from CattleMAP herds i.e. Dairy Score 8 or higher.

- To reduce the risk of introducing BJD with dairy cattle buy Dairy Score 7 or higher.

Remember the **higher the Dairy Score**, the **lower the risk** of introducing BJD.

For further information contact your local Rural Lands Protection Board or visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au).

[\*Penalties of up to \$22,000 may apply under the *Stock Disease Act 1923* where movement conditions are not met or false declarations are made].

---

## Best Practice Beef Cattle Husbandry

*Alastair Rayner, Livestock Officer (Beef Products), Tamworth*

**A**nimal welfare is one of the prime responsibilities of all beef producers. Owners, managers and handlers of cattle have a legal obligation to ensure that their animals are provided with adequate feed and water. Management practices must also be carried out according to state legislation and to best practice.

The question of what is best practice is a challenging one. Many producers would consider they do things as best they can. However, accepted practices do change and community standards and expectations often change the way animals can be managed or handled. The mulesing debate in the sheep industry is a classic example of these changes.

It's important that producers stay on top of changes to animal welfare standards and know

what's currently acceptable as well as what is best practice for the animals they manage.

With this in mind, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and the Cattle Council of Australia have produced a new booklet. Titled as; "A guide to best practice husbandry in beef cattle. Branding, castrating and dehorning" This booklet focuses on best practice techniques for branding, castrating and dehorning in cattle and provides information relating to a number of alternatives for each procedure, including necessary equipment and maintenance, OH&S considerations and animal after-care.

The booklet is free and can be ordered through the MLA website (<http://www.mla.com.au>) or by phoning MLA 1800 675 717.

