

# Cattle tick control in NSW

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Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, NSW DPI

## NSW Cattle Tick Program

Control and eradication of cattle ticks protects the viability of the cattle industry in NSW. Cattle ticks are the most serious external parasite of cattle in Australia estimated to cost the cattle industry over \$160 million annually. The tick can carry the disease 'tick fever', which can kill cattle and has the potential to cause significant economic damage to the beef cattle and dairy industries of NSW. The estimated cost to the NSW industry if cattle tick became endemic is \$32 million annually.

A program to detect and eradicate cattle tick infestations in NSW has operated since the 1920s. Cattle tick infestations were common as far south as Kempsey but new infestations are now mostly confined to the far north coast. Occasional infestations occur outside that area.

The NSW government spends about \$4 million a year on the cattle tick program. Industry oversight of the program occurs via the Cattle Tick Ministerial Advisory Committee, who meet twice yearly and advise the Minister for Primary Industries on the cattle tick program.

Cattle tick is listed as a notifiable disease under the *NSW Biosecurity Regulation 2017*.

## Objectives

The current program aims to eradicate cattle tick from NSW by:

- preventing outbreaks of cattle tick and tick fever in NSW by movement controls on cattle tick carriers from tick infested areas
- developing and implementing strategies for cattle tick eradication in NSW compatible with health, safety and environmental demands
- investigating new methods of tick control to reduce chemical use
- updating industry with developments in cattle tick control and eradication

- protecting markets by minimising meat residues following treatments of livestock.

## Cattle tick dip sites

The traditional method of treating cattle for ticks is dipping. During dipping cattle jump through a bath of a solution which kills the cattle tick.

More than 1600 cattle tick dip yards were built early last century; most on land leased from stock owners. Arsenic was used in dips up until 1955. DDT was then used until 1962. Since then less persistent tickicides have been used to dip cattle.

Many former dipsites are no longer in use and the NSW government has a strategy to manage these contaminated sites. Health and environmental risks are being managed at dips including:

- Priority sites that require clean-up.
- Sites that are no longer needed by the cattle tick program and are listed for decommissioning.
- Active required by the cattle tick program or stock owners.

## More information

The NSW DPI tick webpage has extensive resources on ticks including cattle tick.

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/agriculture/live-stock/health/images/information-by-species/cattle/ticks>

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