

Vet's Corner: Seasonal Disease Pattern Change?

A few years ago, an agronomy report from Iowa State University proposed that corn growers should move up traditional planting dates to compensate for global climate change. Meteorology and agronomy are not part of Veterinary college curriculum, so I do not have an expert opinion on the cause of the recent mild winter and spring weather (El Nino vs. global climate change vs. good luck???). But we have definitely noticed more humid and warm cattle barns this year. This milder weather pattern has been responsible for more pneumonia and mastitis cases and we even had an outbreak of pinkeye in first lactation heifers in early April.

We are especially on the outlook for a harsh pinkeye case load this year. From Midwestern dairy calf veterinarians, we are hearing about a new strain of pinkeye that is resistant to present commercial vaccines and traditional antibiotic treatment. To control the new strain, veterinarians have made autogenous vaccines for individual farms and developed new treatments. So far, we have not diagnosed this resistant strain in the Northeast, but expect to see it soon in herds that purchase replacements from the Midwest.

To compound the pinkeye problem, the early mild weather will allow for an early fly hatch which could allow extra fly generations and a fly population explosion as the summer unfolds. Excessive flies can lead to fast transmission of pinkeye, so we are advising that fly control measures such as premises sprays and predators start early and aggressive this year.

With the early grass growth, heifers may go to pasture a few weeks early this year. Many vaccines for Clostridial disease and pinkeye must be boosted no closer than 3 weeks later, so we are trying to get these initial inoculations done now so there will be a sufficient time delay before the booster is given.

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