**Pink Eye (Keratoconjunctivitis)**

With the wet conditions around the region leading to great plant growth often with that fluffy little seed head, the sticky flies that go with humid weather and the windy conditions many producers are starting to see cases of Pink Eye rear its head again.

Whilst we often talk about pink eye in dusty conditions, wet conditions can hold just as much potential. Pink eye is a bacterial infection commonly affecting sheep, goats, and cattle, targeting the conjunctiva and cornea of the animal’s eye. For Pinkeye to develop there generally needs to be a combination of causative bacteria in the eye and some sort of trauma to the corneal epithelium from external factors such as dust, grass seeds, dryness, or UV light.

The condition is contagious and can spread rapidly throughout susceptible groups of animals. Pink eye is painful, and weight loss can be expected, especially in young stock. If left untreated, pink eye can reduce the sale value, cause blindness, and reduce suitability for purpose. British and European cattle groups are affected more severely than tropical cattle breeds.

Most cases of pink eye recover within 4- 6 weeks for cattle and two weeks for sheep and goats. Residual scarring on the cornea (a small white spot on the eye) should be expected in recovered animals. Animals with a unilateral infection may be missed in a pen inspection since they are likely to stand so their good eye faces the observer. Hence, it is recommended that they run through a race/crush system to ensure affected animals are not missed.

Symptoms of Pinkeye include:

* Bloodshot eyes
* Discharge staining the animal's face
* Closed eyelids
* Cloudy eyes
* Weight loss

In most cases, pink eye will heal without treatment. However, correct treatment applied early to the disease may shorten the duration of the disease and prevent it from spreading throughout the herd. A topical application of long-acting antibiotic eye ointment is commonly used to treat pinkeye. Both eyes should be treated even if only one eye shows signs of the disease; this process can be repeated at 48-hour intervals.

The severity of the disease throughout the herd needs to be assessed to determine the value of repeat yarding and treatment weighed against the likelihood of spreading to more animals every time they are condensed into the yards.

Hence the idea of catching the disease early, treating once, applying eye patches as necessary then turning back out to pasture for rest and recuperation is sometimes more beneficial.

The topical eye ointments often contain synthetic penicillins and may not be effective against *Mycoplasma* infections in sheep and goats. If this is the case for your herd, subconjunctival injection (an injection administered by a Vet into the eye) of antibiotic and anti-inflammatory drugs may be helpful for severely affected animals. There are also vaccinations available for the treatment of pink eye.

Call Gilgandra Veterinary Clinic for more information if you suspect or require treatment for your herd.