

## **Don't let Buffalo Fly Bite into your Profits!**

It's Buffalo Fly season and now is the time to treat. Dark coated cattle, bulls, older cattle and those in poor condition are the most susceptible. The tropical breeds do not appear to be as severely affected as the British and European breeds.

### ***SYMPTOMS OF BUFFALO FLY:***

Each fly feeds up to 10-40 times per day by puncturing the skin and taking blood. The discomfort caused to the cattle is obvious as they continually try and shake off the flies, resulting in weight loss, sore and irritated eyes, lesions and pink eye.

*Reduction in weight gain.* In beef cattle, a moderate infestation of some 200 buffalo flies recorded losses that averaged 15 kg over a 100-day fly season. The constant irritation will also cause milk production to reduce which will have a flow on effect for the calves and in turn reduce their weight. Dairy cows affected by buffalo fly had reduced milk production by more than half a litre per day.

*Lesions:* Left untreated Buffalo fly can cause nasty lesions that not only can permanently damage the hide but also can cause infection and more discomfort to the cattle.

*Pink Eye:* Untreated cattle are more likely to develop pink eye than those that are treated. Pink eye can also cause blindness in one or both eyes, is highly contagious and requires treatment.

### ***HOW DO I CONTROL BUFFALO FLY?***

There are a number of options available to the producer and the method you choose will depend on the number of head you are treating and how often you can monitor your animals.

#### ***Chemical Control Options:***

There are three major chemical groups used in Buffalo fly control programs:

- Synthetic Pyrethroids (SP)
- Organophosphates (OP) and carbomates
- Macrocyclic Lactones (MLS)

Combination OP and SP sprays are also available. Remember to check the withholding period (WHP) and Export Slaughter Interval (ESI) of any chemicals used especially if you are planning on selling livestock to the markets.

*Insecticide-impregnated eartags:* Most tags are effective for 10 to 16 weeks. Some brands require two tags and others only one. We use brands that only require one tag due to less handling and less holes in their ears, especially for our show team.

*Pour-Ons:* For small numbers of cattle this is often a very effective method although application will need to be more regular.

*Sprays:* Usually a cheaper option requiring multiple treatments

*Back Rubbers and rubbing posts:* these allow the cattle to self apply and success depends on how often cattle use them.

*Chemical resistance*

By following a few simple strategies you can reduce the incidence of chemical resistance, which will not only benefit the welfare of your cattle but also our environment. Alternating between the two main chemical groups (OP and SP) is highly recommended. Do not use OP's for more than two seasons in a row and SP's continuously for more than one season. Also remove ear tags at the end of their effective lifespan which is normally 10-16 weeks depending on the product so make sure you check.

### ***Non-Chemical Control Options:***

*Organic Back Rubs:* Backrubs soak and feed an organic solution, which is then distributed as the cattle rub themselves against it.

*Culling allergic cattle:* This is a long-term strategy for prevention of the impact of Buffalo fly in a breeding herd. Care must be taken not to confuse the lesions caused by *Stephanofilaria* with allergy, as culling the former will have no impact on breeding a herd with buffalo fly resistance.

*Buffalo fly traps:* Buffalo fly traps can reduce fly populations by up to 70%. They are mainly used in situations where cattle can be trained to use them on a regular basis such as in dairies or cell-grazing situations.

*Dung beetles:* Dung beetles reduce buffalo fly populations by removing or spreading dung so that the flies cannot breed in it.

### **Helpful Websites:**

- [http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/4790\\_20084.htm](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/4790_20084.htm)
- <http://bellingerlandcare.org.au/documents/farming/buffalo-fly-control/LPI060BuffaloFlyRecommendations2003.pdf>