

Drought has no effect on parasites

In drought conditions where everything struggles to survive, one might think that parasites also shrivel up and die. Not so, in drought conditions parasites thrive in cattle herds. The most common cattle parasite is the *Ostertagia ostertagi* or the brown stomach worm. They have a simple life cycle. *Ostertagia* live in the cow's abomasum and produce eggs that are passed out in the manure. These eggs hatch in the cow patty where juvenile larvae squirm up a nearby blade of grass waiting for another cow to ingest them. The larvae go back to the abomasum where they grow into adults and produce eggs. The cycle repeats itself.

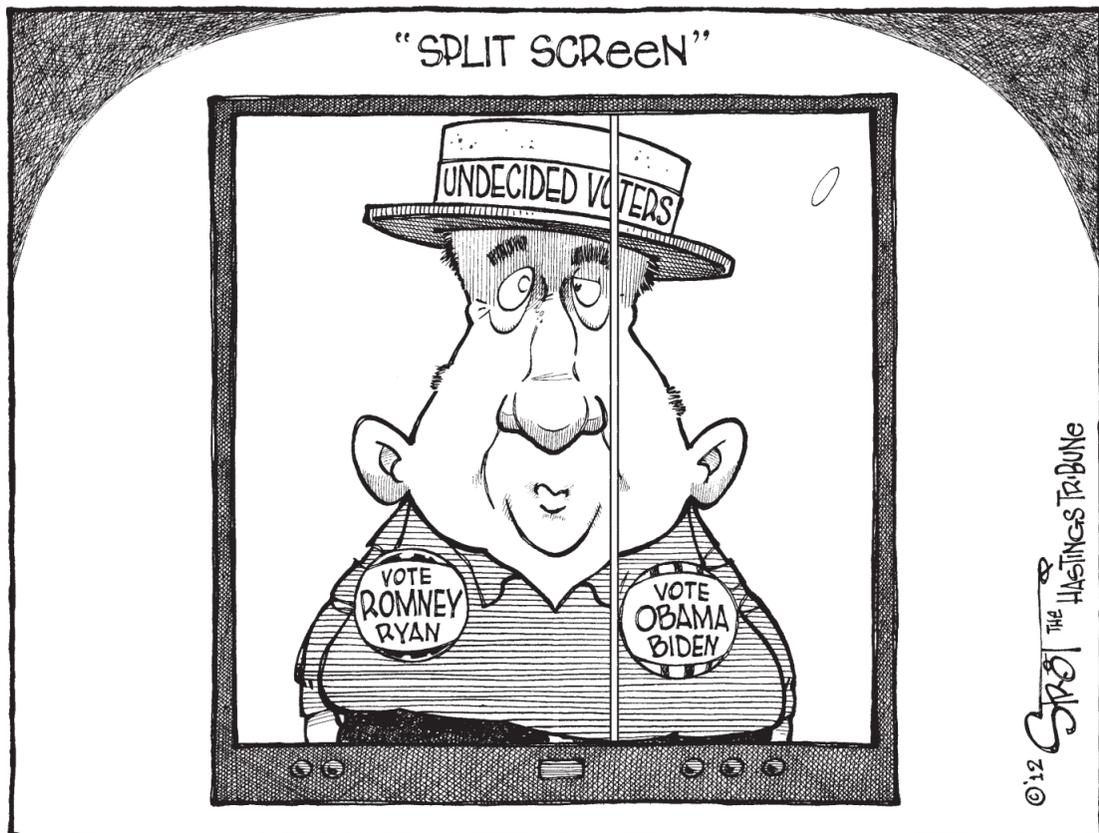
Vet tips
Dr. Aaron White



Cattle are very particular grazers, eating choice grass while avoiding harsh plants and where cow patties are located. Forage is scarce during drought conditions so cattle will eat anything that is available to them (including poisonous plants). Usually the greenest grass is the immediate area surrounding the cow patties, which results in changed grazing behavior for the cattle.

Parasites are nasty little critters harming cattle in two major ways. Parasites decrease appetite and suppress the cattle's immune system. Allowing cattle to become infested with parasites, will decrease, food consumption, which is devastating to an animal who is already struggling to survive in drought conditions. De-worming cattle and calves is equally as important. In the fall, calves need to be as healthy as possible for the weaning season. Parasites will cause decreased cattle immunity, making them much more prone to disease. The cattle need to be in the best possible body condition going into the winter months to maintain pregnancy with the most efficient amount of feed possible. If producers would like to track the effectiveness of their parasite program, fecal egg load counts are very useful. No herd can be completely parasite free 100 percent of the time, but effective management can increase efficiency and profitability. Herds that have parasite overburden need to be addressed and corrected. Concerns with overall management issues also need to be looked at.

The best option is to de-worm cattle twice-a-year. This is labor intensive, but if treated correctly, cattle will thrive when parasites are controlled. No de-wormer is 100 percent effective and parasite control is an on going battle. Parasites over winter in cold country and over summer in hot country. Strategic de-worming is critical. Also remember that early weaning not only benefits the cows and calves, but it benefits the pastures. The pastures will benefit from less grazing pressure and allow sunlight to dry out all the parasite eggs and larvae. Please contact your veterinarian to custom build a health management program for your cattle.



An eventful mission trip to Mexico

More than an hour before dawn our little band of missionaries began our journey. An elder from the church prayed for our safety on the trip. On the way out of town we stopped at one of the couple's home to pick up some water. As the wife exited the van, she stepped on an uneven curb and down she went. A painfully twisted ankle. After the injury was treated and we were re-loaded in the van, one of our group said, "I think we better get our money back on David's prayer." Anyway, that set the tone for the trip and we haven't stopped laughing since.

We have an almost 16-year old on the team, and she has been a joy. We knew she was a little apprehensive about taking off on this trip with so many "mature" people. We had learned her biggest fear was that, "they're just going to sing all the way."

So we had a little plan cooked up. After the ankle incident and we were back on the road, Melba said, "It sure is quiet in here." To which I replied, "Well, we can't have that!" In unison, we all began to sing, "Koom, bye ah, my Lord. Koom, bye ah. Koom, bye ah, my Lord. Koom, bye ah." Then we cracked up again. I'm not sure Molly thought it was as funny as we did, but she was a really good sport about it.

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



My daughter, Halley, was to meet us at the first night's stop; a little church in a really little Texas town. We told her we would bring her an air mattress. It was pretty late when she got there and we had already blown up her single size, one level air mattress. Right beside it was our super deluxe, queen-size, multi-level air bed. She looked at our bed; looked back at hers and said, "Really? I mean, really. Do you think that's what Jesus would do?"

Forget the bed disparity, Halley can't comprehend that we're all ready to crash at 9:30 p.m. Normally, I can keep late hours with the best of them, but traveling in a van where you can't really get comfortable is tiring and all any of us want to do is get some rest.

This column is being written the night before we cross the border and I'm the only one still up. We're camped out in the lobby and fellowship hall of a church in Del Rio, Texas and

I'm in the secretary's office using her computer and internet access. Modern technology is truly wonderful. Most of the time we're taking a step back in time tomorrow when we cross the border. It doesn't take long to realize you're in a third world country. Cell phones may or may not work. Not that we'll have time to use them very much anyway.

I'll have a full report next week. Hasta la vista.

-ob-

While in the secretary's office I accessed my personal e-mail account and found an e-fanmail. First of all I'm always surprised when someone tells me they read "OutBack" and doubly surprised when they say they enjoy it. There was a man from our old community that never missed an opportunity to tell me I'd never be the writer my mother was. My letter came from a reader I inherited from my mother's column. Kathy said she had met my mom once and was impressed by her spunky personality and her collections.

Well, Kathy, she impressed a lot of us. There was and will always be only one Sunflower Sue. They broke the mold when they made her.

Give people what they want, demand and need

While almost every industry today does a less than perfect job of living by the motto, "the customer is the most important part of business," Kansas farmers and ranchers are one segment that adheres to this philosophy.

It's been a gradual process but one that has consistently picked up steam. Still, Kansas farmers and ranchers cannot rest on their laurels but must continue to look to the future with an open mind and the flexibility to develop new ways of marketing their products.

Our customers are driven by changes in personal preferences and increasing income levels. They tend to be a bit more generous with their hard-earned money in good times and more tight fisted when our economy is down. Today's customer will continue to spend his/her money on what they want. Convenience is more important than ever before; however, price is also important and will remain a major piece of the buying equation.

Our agricultural economy will continue to be driven by customer demand. Buyers of farm and ranch

Insight

John Schlageck



products continue to become wiser and savvier every day.

Tomorrow's well-informed shopper will want, and demand, more information about how food is produced. It will be up to farmers and ranchers to help provide such information.

These customers should be viewed as friends of agriculture who are interested in buying products that keep farmers and ranchers in the business of producing food, fuel and fiber.

We should welcome their input and feedback. And once we understand what their needs are - provide for them.

It makes smart business sense for Kansas farmers and ranchers to connect with their customers. In larger communities and next to urban areas

across Kansas, farmers and ranchers are carving out niche markets by providing meats, dairy, fruits and vegetables directly to customers who live there.

By doing so, farm and ranch families have developed the kind of direct, personal relationship with people that eat what they raise. These buyers become friends and in some cases part of an extended family.

Such customers not only have the opportunity to buy and enjoy quality products for their families, they become more knowledgeable about the product and they know exactly who is producing it.

Customers can find out about a specific animal and how the livestock man raises it and why they care for, and do the things the way they do.

Kansas farmers that connect with their customers will have an advantage. When buyers of farm and ranch products have questions, they will know where to find the expert with an answer - Kansas farmers and ranchers who care for their crops, livestock, land and customers.

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E-mail: nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

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OFFICE HOURS:
8 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.
8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732

STAFF

Dana Paxton..... General Manager
Advertising Director/
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com
Carleen Bell..... Managing Editor
cbell@nwkansas.com
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay Sports
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com
Michael Stephens..... Reporter
Society Editor/Area Sports
mstephens@nwkansas.com
Vicki Henderson..... Computer Production
Marcia Shelton..... Office Manager

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