



The dollar benefits of long-term Buffalo Fly control on cattle.

It is a well-recognised fact that long term infestations of external parasites such as Buffalo Fly can cause a severe economic impact on cattle production. Some of the estimated losses attributed to the fly are loss of weight, decreased milk production, devalued hides and general unkempt appearance of infested animals.

Before cattle producers consider the economic implications of their buffalo fly control strategy, they should gain some idea of the benefits and costs associated with long-term fly control. Presently insecticidal ear tags are the only fly treatment regime that will give sustained long-term control of Buffalo Fly. Sprays and pour-ons only offer short-term control and thus any weight gain and productivity advantage gained during the fly free period will be negated in the period between treatments.

A search of the Internet and a review of available scientific literature, both in Australia and overseas has delivered the following information on the benefits of long term control of Buffalo Fly (*Haematobia irritans exigua*) and Horn fly (*Haematobia irritans irritans*)

1. Increases in live-weight gains of 14% and 19% in cattle given long-term protection from Buffalo fly. These productivity gains when translated into dollars, could give a ten-fold return on the purchase of insecticidal ear tags.
2. Weaning weights of calves where the cows were given long term fly protection were 14 and 17kgs greater respectively in two trials conducted in Queensland. In the second trial the total weight increment for the group of 70 weaners was 1,155kgs more than the untreated weaners. Such weight gains by calves at weaning should set them up for earlier turn-off as steers and represents a substantial increase in value on today's market.
3. Anecdotal evidence suggests that conception rates in breeding cattle may be affected by heavy infestations of Buffalo fly, due to cows not cycling regularly and suppressed activity by bull's due to irritation.
4. Lesions caused by the Buffalo Fly transmitted *Stephanofilaria* spp. parasite cause significant damage to cattle hides resulting in devalued returns to cattle producers. These lesions, which are a potential site for Screwworm infestation, also make cattle destined to the S.E.Asia live export trade unattractive. Cattle presented lesion-free for sale on the domestic market should attract a buyer's premium, due to their cleaner appearance. The use of insecticidal ear tags for long-term fly control helps eliminate these lesions.

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