Disease of dairy cattle - warts and eye cancer

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PAPILLOMA or warts are by no means uncommon in dairy cattle in Western Australia. In maturing cows, they usually occur on the udder, while in young stock they may be found on the head, neck, and shoulders. In bad cases, a large proportion of the body area may be covered with the warts, forming large cauliflower-like masses which often bleed easily.

The condition is caused by a filterable virus, and animals may be affected through rubbing on affected animals, or by being placed where affected animals have been. Badly affected animals do not thrive, while the warty condition seriously depreciates the value of the hide.

Warts on the teats are infectious and may be transmitted from cow to cow on the hands of the milker. These warts are of many shapes and sizes, and may cover all the teats of the udder. Long slender warts are easily removed with scissors or by tying a silk ligature tightly around their base so that they will slough off in a few days. The roots of such warts should then be treated with caustic potash sticks.

Treatment. — Flat warts, which may cover almost the entire udder surface, are sometimes extremely difficult to deal with, and treatment should not be attempted until the cow is dry. Careful perseverance with treatment is necessary. Application of glacial acetic acid on the end of a match-stick, repeated over a number of days may cause the disappearance of the wart. Salicylic acid (one part), collodion (seven parts) may be painted on once per day with good effect. Salicylic acid (one part), glycerine (three parts) is also used. The use of a silver nitrate stick or caustic potash stick is more efficient, but more dangerous. Similarly, commercial hydrochloric acid may be applied with caution to the exact area of the wart.

In the very early stages of wart formation, the daily application of crude castor oil has been known to check the development in some instances, although several weeks may elapse before a cure is effected. Olive oil smeared thickly over the area between milkings is also recommended.

The internal administration of Fowler's solution of arsenic, 1 tablespoon twice daily for stock 6-12 months old until symptoms of arsenical poisoning begin to appear, is claimed to have a
beneficial effect in some cases. A wart vaccine is in use in America, but no such procedure has been tried out as far as is known in this country.

A Jersey bull carrying large numbers of warts on the head and neck.

**EPITHELIOMA (EYE CANCER)**

Epithelioma of the eyes of cattle, more commonly referred to as eye cancer, is a malignant type of tumour which attacks the eye and related tissues.

The specific cause of this condition is not known, but possible contributing factors in the form of dust, sand, insects and other irritants have been suggested. In the case of Hereford cattle, which lack protective pigments in the eye membrane and skin surrounding the eyes, the strong rays of the sun have been mentioned as a possible cause.

The growth may have its origin in the *Membrana nictitans* (third eyelid) at the inner angle of the eye, in the mucous lining of the lids, or in the cornea (front part) of the eyeball. It may first appear as a small reddish mass which, as it becomes larger, assumes an irregular and fungus-like shape. These growths are sensitive and when injured, bleed easily. The eye proper is not at first involved in the early stages, but later when it is affected, the eyesight is destroyed.

Infection follows rapidly, and with the multiplication of bacteria, there is much pus formation and a foul odour, while in warmer weather these growths may be seen to be infested with maggots. The eye is eventually completely destroyed by the growth, when then spreads to the surrounding subcutaneous tissues and bony structure of the orbit. In very advanced cases, cancerous cells may be distributed via the blood stream to internal bodily organs, while there is a progressive loss of condition.

**Treatment.**—Nothing can be done when the tumour has become extensive enough to involve the entire eye and adjacent structures. In the latter case, should the animal still be in fair condition, it should be sent to the market for slaughter.

Operative procedure consists of the total removal of the cancerous tissue, usually under local anaesthesia. With a well established growth, the total removal (enucleation) of the eyeball would be necessary.

It is therefore extremely important that the operation should be performed as soon as a definite diagnosis has been made. When performed early enough, the results are usually quite satisfactory. Needless to say, such an operative technique would have to be carried out by a veterinary surgeon.