Infectious keratitis (pinkeye) in cattle

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DURING the summer and autumn months, "pinkeye" is frequently prevalent amongst cattle in the South-West where it may become a source of considerable loss and inconvenience to dairy farmers and graziers.

The earliest symptom consists of a watery discharge from the eyes which soon becomes purulent and there is usually evidence of discomfort upon exposure to light. Later the cornea becomes cloudy and opaque and is sometimes deeply ulcerated. Rupture of the cornea with blindness in the affected eye is not uncommon.

In beef cattle there is considerable loss of condition while in dairy cows the milk yield may be greatly depressed. Without appropriate treatment, several weeks will elapse before recovery occurs.

The disease is highly contagious, spreading most rapidly when cattle are herded in close contact with one another, and flies are believed to play an important part in the dissemination of the infection. It is therefore advisable, as soon as the disease makes its appearance, to isolate affected animals from the remainder of the herd.

For the treatment of the disease the application of Chloromycetin eye ointment is recommended. This preparation is available from chemists in $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. tubes. In early cases, two applications separated by an interval of 12 hours will usually effect a cure but in long-standing cases several treatments may be necessary before the desired result is obtained. A thin ribbon of the ointment about an inch in length should be squeezed on to the tip of the finger and smeared inside the lower eyelid.

While treatment of this kind presents no difficulty with dairy cattle or with quiet stud animals it is generally impracticable with beef herds which would be required to be yarded and put through a crush twice daily. Such herds should, however, be transferred to a paddock where there is heavy shade and easy access to feed and water.

Other applications which have been recommended for the treatment of pinkeye include penicillin in oil (the tubes of penicillin suspension as supplied for the treatment of mastitis may be used for this purpose), and eye lotions such as 20 per cent. argyrol or 10 per cent. zinc sulphate, but while cheaper than chloromycetin none of these preparations is nearly as effective.—C.R.T.

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