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WARTS ON CATTLE

By
OFFICERS OF THE VETERINARY BRANCH

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

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 warts. 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 new method of treatment which, in some cases, has produced good results, is the injection of lithium antimony thiomalate (Anthiomaline, M and B).

This is administered either by subcutaneous (under the skin) or intramuscular (into the muscle) injections at a dose rate of 10 to 20 c.c. depending on the size of the animal. Injections should be given twice weekly to a total of five or six doses.

Slight side-effects, consisting of muscular stiffness, mild fever or depression, may occasionally be observed following the use of this drug, but they are only of a transient nature.

The action of the drug in the body causes some of the warts to fall off and loosens others so that they may easily be detached.

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