

We are beginning to see more and more signs indicating that spring is here and winter is over. Thanks to the warm temperatures and sunny skies, pastures are finally beginning to change from brown to green. For many cattle producers this is a sight for sore eyes. Now that pastures are producing more forage, producers may consider reducing or even completely eliminating the quantity of feed and/or hay that is being fed. However, producers should still pay as much, if not more, attention to the body condition of his cattle during this time. Due to the increase in forage available to your cattle, there is no reason that a healthy cow should not gain weight in these conditions. Carefully monitor your herd and be on the lookout for any male or female in the herd that is not gaining weight along with the rest of the herd. If you have one that does not appear to be increasing in body condition it may have something known as chronic wasting disease, or cwd (not to be confused with CWD, a virus common in deer). This week we will briefly discuss three main causes of cwd, and risks they can pose to an operation.

The first cause of cwd is malnutrition. This is most common in young cows, or old cows with bad teeth. The probability of malnutrition occurring will drastically increase if the female has a calf. This is likely due to her inability to meet her nutritional and lactation requirements. Females in your herd that fall into either of these categories should be carefully monitored throughout the year to ensure that they are in good body condition and are productive and are kept on higher planes of nutrition.

The second cause of CWD is due to various diarrheal diseases. Liver flukes and chronic parasitism are among the most common causes of diarrheal diseases. Liver flukes can be prevented if the proper wormer is used. Because not all wormers treat liver flukes it is best to carefully read the label before applying a wormer. Chronic parasitism is often seen in young bulls. It is dangerous as the parasites can damage the animal's abomasum, resulting in scarring. Johne's disease is another common diarrheal disease, caused by a viral infection in the intestinal tract of ruminants. Lastly, chronic bowel syndrome is a diarrheal disease, and is most often seen in older cattle.

If it has been determined that CWD is not caused by malnutrition or a diarrheal disease, it is likely that it is caused by a non-diarrheal disease. Common non-diarrheal diseases include cancer, or chronic liver disease. Renal disease is also common, and is mainly caused by Acorn Toxicity. Low grade poison may also be a type of non-diarrheal disease that causes CWD in cattle.

As you can see, Chronic Wasting Disease may be caused by a number of things. That is why it is important to carefully watch your cattle and act immediately if you notice something that does not seem right. If you detect a cow in your herd that is doing noticeably poorer compared to its herd mates, she should be examined immediately so that a proper diagnosis and treatment plan can be made. If you have any questions, or believe one of your cows may have CWD, please contact us.

Thanks,  
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