

## **Bloat In Cattle (2007)**

**AN outbreak of bloat and pulpy kidney is playing havoc for the grazing industry in the Gunnedah area with hundreds of cattle having already succumbed to the disease.**

Bloat and pulpy kidney has been identified in areas where stock may not have enough fibre in their diet, because of medic and legumes dominating in pasture paddocks. With recent rains making paddocks lush and farmers cutting back on supplementing their stocks feed with dry roughage, cattle have simply been gorging themselves to death.

Gunnedah Veterinary Hospital Vet Dr David Amos said frothy bloat has primarily been the cause of cattle deaths in the area. Dr Amos said bloat was caused by the formation of a stable froth from the legumes in the rumen of the cattle. The build-up of froth prevents the normal belching of rumen gasses and the resulting accumulation of excess gas in the rumen produces pressure on the lungs and can eventually restrict breathing to the point of causing death by suffocation. "Too much foam in the cattle's stomach is like having a padded post bag jammed in there that stops the cattle from belching. The foam and gas, trapped inside the stomach, pushes the diaphragm up and the cattle are strangled from the inside," Dr Amos said. "It is an extremely painful way to die and very distressing to watch," he said.

Dr Amos urged farmers to protect their stock through good management practices. There are a number of simple preventative measures that can be put in place, including paraffin oils in water, bloat blocks and capsules. "The problem with paraffin oils is that the cattle might not be thirsty because they are getting enough from their lush diets. With bloat blocks you also have to make sure the cattle are licking them. "It may also be necessary to avoid or limit feeding high-risk pastures," he said.

Dr Amos said some of the cattle in the district may also be dying as the result of pulpy kidney, a disease that can be easily vaccinated against and is often confused with bloat. Pulpy kidney is caused by bacteria, which is normally present in the bowel in ruminants, multiplying in number. Under certain conditions these bacteria proliferate rapidly in the intestines and produce lethal quantities of toxin. These conditions may occur when grazing lush, rapidly growing pasture and crops or with heavy grain feeding in feedlots. "Symptoms of pulpy kidney are bellowing, mania and convulsions, followed by death." Adult cattle often exhibit a severe terminal bloat, while symptoms of bloat are an increase in the rate and force of ruminal movements in the early stages followed by a reduction in movements. As the gas increases, there is respiratory distress and an elevation of the heart rate.

“The end results of pulpy kidney and bloat are exactly the same. The cattle are generally found dead with their legs in the air and bloated. It is only through a detailed post-mortem by a highly qualified professional that you will be able to tell whatever it was pulpy kidney or bloat that was the cause.”

He recommends that farmers implement measures to prevent either of the two conditions. Dr Amos said that while sound management practices while not eliminate bloat completely, it would reduce the number of cattle deaths substantially.