

# Red Meat Development Programme

## Psoroptic Mange in cattle



The VLA (Veterinary Laboratories Agency) has recently diagnosed Psoroptic mange, caused by *Psoroptes* species (sp.) mites in ten cattle herds in Wales, with anecdotal reports of infection on two other holdings. These are the first cases seen in GB since the 1980s and it is probable that the infection has been imported from Europe. There is no link with *Psoroptes ovis* (sheep scab) cases.

### What does it look like?

Clinical signs are more commonly seen in the autumn and winter. The *Psoroptes* sp mites cause a severe skin disease with scab formation along the back, shoulders and tail head of cattle. There is intense itching.

Weight loss can be severe and deaths can occur if skin lesions are extensive.

The mites become less active and numbers reduce in the summer.

All breeds of cattle are susceptible, although disease can be particularly severe in British Blues. Most cases diagnosed to date have been in beef herds, but infection in one dairy herd has also been detected

Buying in infected cattle is the most likely way of getting the disease. Spread can occur by animal contact at market and in livestock lorries. It may be difficult to spot disease in the early stages, or in the summer months when mite numbers are low and clinical signs are minimal.

### What should you do?

**If you suspect that your cattle have psoroptic mange, you should speak to your veterinary surgeon, who will have the mites identified from skin scrapes.**

**Farmers should consult their veterinary surgeon as treatment is not straightforward. Failure to kill the mites will lead to a prolonged and more serious disease outbreak and increase the risk of spread to other animals on the farm or other herds.**

The majority of cases diagnosed to date have failed to respond to ivermectin or moxidectin (macrocyclic lactones (MLs), the licensed treatment for psoroptic mange. Alternative treatments may have to be given at an increased frequency, prescribed by your veterinary surgeon.

Removal of as many of the scabs before treatment by shampooing and clipping is also advisable, as they could protect the mites from treatment.

**It is very important that your vet takes samples to diagnose and check the effectiveness of the treatment, as clinical signs may improve after some treatments but live mites may still be present.**

Treatment should be given to all animals in the group and any in-contact animals. Movement from infected housing should also be advised (mites can live off animals and be infective for at least 12 days). If the housing is kept free from cattle for a number of months, re-infection is unlikely.

It is essential to take this disease seriously and treat effectively. Experience from other European countries has shown that it is possible for this to become the most common skin disease in cattle with consequently severe production losses.

**Although this is not a notifiable disease, the VLA would be very interested to hear of any suspected cases of psoroptic mange in cattle. We can then advise your veterinary surgeon on effective treatment and continue to monitor this serious threat to the cattle industry.**

**Please inform your local regional laboratory in Carmarthen (Tel 01267 235244), Aberystwyth (Tel 01970 612374) or Shrewsbury (Tel 01743 467621), of any suspect cases.**

**The Red Meat Development Programme is managed by Hybu Cig Cymru on behalf of Farming Connect.**

