

CATTLE WARTS

By: Elli Doll, Grade 9
Washington County
Veterinary Science

OVERVIEW

Cattle warts are caused by the bovine papilloma virus. Warts show up two months after exposure to the virus. They are usually dry, tan-colored bumps that appear on the face and neck, and sometimes the shoulders. They have a horny surface. Calves under the age of two years are most susceptible because they have not yet developed an immunity. Left untreated, warts will remain for about one year before they disappear on their own. Warts are highly contagious and spread easily between animals.

PROBLEMS

Typically, warts are not a major problem for an individual animal unless they are in an irritable area, such as the eyelid. The trouble is when an animal needs a health certificate or when warts appear on show cattle. Cattle are not allowed at shows if they have any sign of a wart because it is a contagious virus. In addition, an animal with warts will be worth less.

CAUSES

Warts are spread by direct contact with an infected animal or through contact with equipment touched by an infected animal. Once an animal has the virus, the warts show up about two months later. Warts are more likely to show up if the animal has been experiencing stress. You won't always know if an animal carries the virus. Warts will show up on some animals, but not on others. For instance, a three-year-old cow could be carrying the virus but because of her age, not have warts showing up. Then the virus could be easily passed to a six-month-old steer without you even realizing. Instances where the virus can be passed along through indirect contact would be through a feeder, waterer, halter, or any other equipment used by different animals.

CONTROL & TREATMENT

When a wart is spotted, the infected animal should immediately be removed from the rest of the herd to prevent spreading of the virus. The surest way to get rid of warts is to remove them. This is typically done via a pliers or else by tightly tying a ligature around the base of a wart. Sometimes, the removal of one wart will trigger immunity and the other warts will go away. A typical medicine used on cattle is WartsOff, which is available through Sullivan Supply. The ointment should be applied twice a day and usually the warts will disappear within a week. Another treatment is WD-40 - spray the warts each day for a couple weeks and they should disappear. The surest way to get rid of warts, however, is to scrape one off, using a knife or curry comb, and then feed it to the animal. This triggers the immune system to fight off the virus. It is also good to note that warts cannot be passed from cattle to humans, or vice versa. If it is not necessary that warts be removed quickly, however, warts will go away on their own. What helps this most is warm weather and lots of sunshine.

PREVENTION

There are vaccines, however they are each only preventative against one or a few strains of the virus. Infected cattle should be separated to prevent the spread. Be sure to thoroughly disinfect all equipment in between uses by different animals. Sanitize pens in between different groups of animals.

SOURCES

- Endecott, Rachel. "Warts in Cattle: Cause and Cure." *The Cattle Site*, Global Ag Media. 23 April 2020. <<http://www.thecattlesite.com/articles/3999/warts-in-cattle-cause-and-cure/>>
- Ennis, Leigh Ann. "Cattle Warts: The Good, the Bad, the Bumpy." *Jeffers Pet, Equine, and Livestock*. 23 April 2020. <<https://blog.jefferspet.com/cattle-warts-good-bad-bumpy/>>
- Smith-Thomas, Heather. "Skin Problems in Young Cattle: Warts and Ringworm." *Tri-State Livestock News*, Swift Communications, Inc. 26 April 2020. <<https://www.tsln.com/trending/skin-problems-in-young-cattle-warts-and-ringworm/>>