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Asian Longhorned Tick

Ticks can create many management challenges and seem to be on the increase. Last week we discussed an emerging bovine pathogen, *Theileria orientalis*, which causes Bovine Theileriosis and how it is primarily vectored by the Asian longhorned tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*). While this pest is not widely found in Kansas in large numbers, producers need to remain vigilant in watching for it.

This invasive tick species originally native to East Asian countries has been identified in more than half of the states, primarily in the eastern US. Since its initial detection in 2017 in New Jersey, it has rapidly expanded its range. A major contributor to this rapid spread is the significant movement of livestock around the country, some of which have ticks feeding on them during transport.

The Asian longhorned tick is asexual, meaning that females do not have to mate with males to reproduce. Almost all Asian longhorned ticks found are females and a single female will lay up to 3,000 eggs in her lifetime. This reproductive capability contributes to the rapid population growth and establishment in new environments. Unfed Asian longhorned ticks are light reddish tan to dark reddish with brown, dark markings. Adult females are grey green with yellowish markings and the size of a pea after feeding. Other unfed stages of the tick are very small, about the size of a sesame seed or smaller.

The life cycle of the Asian longhorned tick consists of three distinct life stages after hatching from the egg: larvae, nymphs, and adults. All three life stages must take a blood meal to molt and develop into the next stage. Larval ticks are mostly found looking for hosts in late summer into fall. Nymphs generally start to be found in the spring until early summer. From mid-summer until early fall adult ticks tend to infest livestock, which can lead to significant livestock health concerns.

Ticks can be found feeding around the ears, along the underline, including the "armpit" areas for both front and hind legs, and around the tail head. These infestations can be severe, with hundreds or even thousands of ticks present on a single animal. Heavy infestations can cause significant stress in affected animals, leading to reduced growth and decreased milk production. In extreme cases, excessive blood loss from large numbers of ticks can result in death.

Ongoing research is being conducted to increase understanding of this pest and best management practices. Current recommended management practices for reducing risk of tick and disease exposure depend on preventative measures. Typical tick treatments are effective against the Asian longhorned tick. Consult your veterinarian for recommendations regarding treatment protocols.

Monitor cattle for the presence of ticks. When possible, purchase animals from known sources and inspect any purchased animals upon arrival, especially when importing animals from infected areas. Implement a buffer between pasture and wooded areas, managing grass at shorter heights, four inches or less, near wooded areas. Spring pasture burning has also been shown to reduce tick numbers. For more information visit: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/asian-longhorned>