Blue ticks

(Add to DISEASES OF DAIRY COWS in *Dairy Farming at your fingertips)*

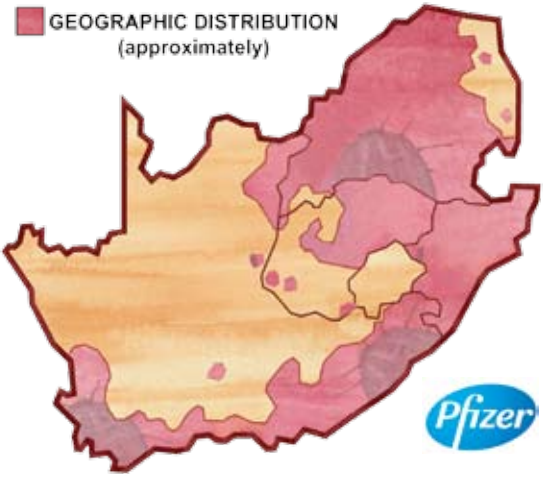
Blue ticks are found in most parts of South Africa, although they are particularly common along the coastline and the north-eastern parts of the country.

Over the last few years, the occurrence of blue ticks and the impact they have on farming has increased tremendously, most probably due to factors such as, amongst others:

- The higher temperatures in certain areas before winter times
- The change in rainfall patterns
- Resistance against some dips, which might be the most important factor

General information

A one-host tick, such as the blue tick, completes its entire lifecycle on a single host.

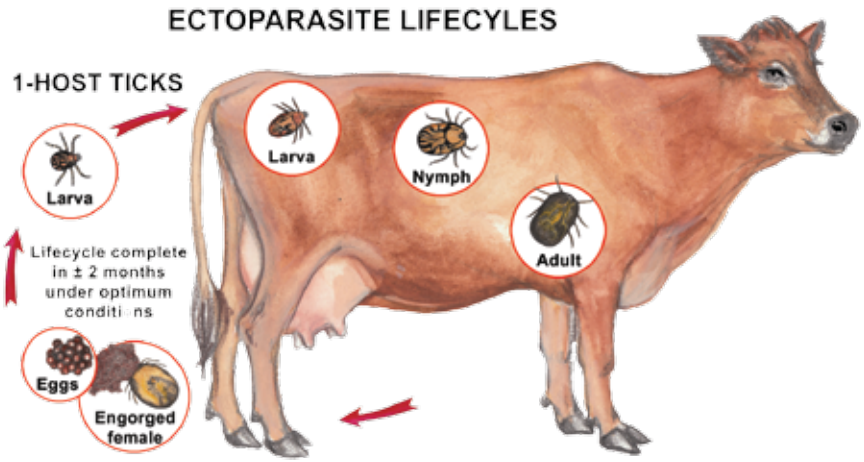


When the adult female is engorged (filled) with blood, she will detach from the host animal, such as a dairy cow, and lay approximately 2 500 eggs. The eggs and the unfed nymphs (baby ticks) are very small and not easily seen.

Blue ticks are usually the first to develop resistance to acaricide (a type of pesticide that is used to kill ticks), because they prefer cattle and are exposed to multiple treatments during their relatively short life cycle.

The entire lifecycle of the blue tick, from egg to larva to nymph to adult and back to egg can be completed in approximately two months, which means that three or more generations of blue ticks can infect your animals in one season.

Effective treatment early in the rainy season is essential to prevent a build-up of tick numbers in the late summer, which is then very difficult to control.



Favourite sites on cattle

Blue ticks prefer to attach themselves to the cow's body underline, legs, neck and dewlap, where they can feed plentiful and with ease.

Diseases transmitted

Blue ticks transmit African redwater and gall sickness, but also cerebral babesiosis.

Redwater (*Babesia bigemina, Babesia bovis*)

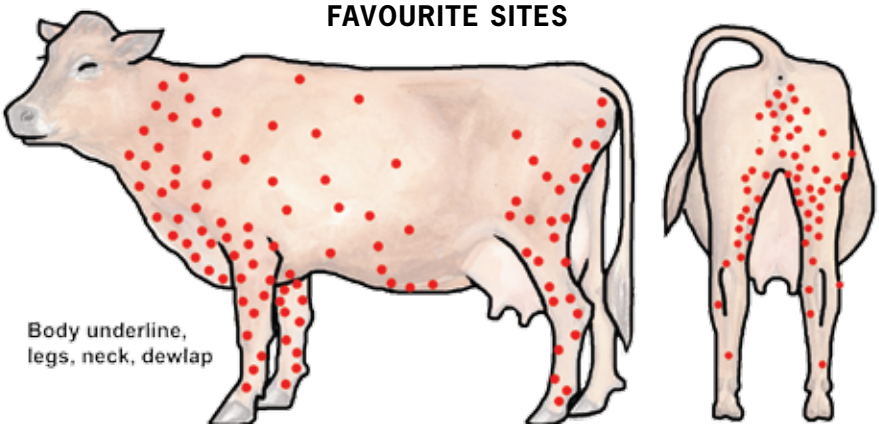
Animals infected with African redwater have light red watery blood, pale mucous membranes that may show jaundice, enlarged liver and spleen, and the urine is dark red in colour.

Other symptoms of African redwater include:

- Fever
- Anaemia, which could result in a lack of energy
- A drop in milk production
- Red urine
- Jaundice
- Anorexia
- Animals may abort

Cerebral babesiosis

Clinical symptoms will also include neurological signs that look like heartwater. If not treated early, infected animals may die within a couple of days.



Treatment
Animals can either be treated with Imidocarb of Diminazine.

Prevention
A balanced control of ticks on animals with the use of acaricides is most important to prevent the transmission of disease by these parasites.

Tick-borne gall sickness (*Anaplasma marginale*)
Animals infected with tick-borne gall sickness will have very pale mucous membranes with jaundice, an enlarged spleen and an impacted colon containing dry, hard faecal balls.

Other symptoms include:
- Variable temperature
- Anaemia, which could result in a lack of energy
- A drop in milk production
- Jaundice
- Anorexia
- Animals may abort
- Rumen stasis with constipation

Treatment
Animals respond well to Terramycin (G333 Act 36/1947), as long as the rumen stasis is also resolved.

Prevention
A balanced control of ticks on animals with the use of acaricides is most important to prevent the transmission of disease by these parasites. UM