



Pest e-alerts



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Gulf Coast Ticks and Spinose Ear Ticks in Cattle

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This is the time of year that cattle producers need to start monitoring or treating cattle for ear tick populations. There have been several reports across the state with cattle severely infested with ear ticks. The majority of the cattle have the Gulf Coast Tick but some have been reported to exhibit a “flop eared” condition which is more likely caused by the Spinose Ear Tick.

Gulf Coast Tick [*Amblyomma maculatum*] (Fig. 1)

This is a three-host tick. As larva and nymph, the Gulf Coast tick is a common pest of ground-inhabiting birds, such as meadowlarks and bobwhite quail, or small rodents. The adults primarily blood feed on cattle, but a variety of other hosts including dog, horse, sheep, deer, coyote and humans can be parasitized. This tick has become increasingly abundant in Oklahoma in the last 20 years and is an important pest of cattle. In addition, the Gulf Coast Tick transmits *Hepatozoon americanum* to dogs and coyotes which is an often fatal, tick-borne protozoal disease of dogs in the United States of America. The adults attach to the ears of cattle and are most abundant in early April to mid-June. When infestations are high on cattle, the ears may become thickened and curled causing a condition called “gotch ear” (Fig. 2).

Insecticide impregnated ear tags are the most effective treatment for Gulf Coast Ticks. Usually ticks will fall off after one week from tagging the animals and a small proportion of the ticks will remain attached but are dead. In some cases where cattle were tagged with an insecticidal ear tag the ticks become agitated and moved to the tail head region. If this is observed additional control should be applied in the form of an approved pour-on or spray for beef animals.