



## Beware of Lead Poisoning in Cattle

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<https://southeast.lls.nsw.gov.au/resource-hub/newsletters/2019/janfeb/animal->



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Lead poisoning in cattle is more common than you think. Over the years, I have seen a number of lead poisoning cases involving young and adult cattle. Cattle are commonly affected, but sheep and goats may also become affected. The most common source of lead is from ingestion of old batteries, but I have also seen lead poisoning occur from ingestion of other lead based materials such as flashings, sump oil, grease and burnt building materials containing lead.



Lead poisoning can be fatal and cattle don't have to ingest much to develop signs of ill health either. A range of symptoms may be observed including strange behaviour, mania, depression, dullness, walking aimlessly including into fences and trees or dying of misadventure due to sudden onset blindness.

**Dry times and drought may predispose cattle to ingest**

**lead.** Cattle are attracted to the salty taste of lead and return often to lick and chew at the source. I have also seen cattle on lush crops chasing lead because they were craving salt.



Blood samples can be tested from live animals and kidney samples from deceased animals to confirm or rule out lead poisoning. Often where one animal dies there will be many other animals that have sub lethal levels in their blood. Lead poisoning is a notifiable disease as it is important that lead does not end up in the food chain. This means that you must notify your local LLS District Veterinarian if you suspect or know your cattle to be lead affected. There is no cure for lead poisoning in livestock but if not lethal, the lead will eventually clear from their bodies. Lead affected animals must be detained on farm and cannot enter the food chain until further testing by a veterinarian indicates they are safe to do so.

Prevention is best by removing old batteries and lead containing material from the farm.

Prevent stock from accessing burnt rubbish that may have contained lead based materials, including old lead based paints. When moving stock to new paddocks, agisting or acquiring new land, always inspect for any potential hazards before running stock on there.



Contact your local LLS District Veterinarian for advice if you are concerned that your stock may have been exposed or want to know more about lead poisoning.

\*South East Local Land Services, PO Box 49, Boorowa, NSW 2586, Australia

**Photo** (at left) added by The LEAD Group to this article:

2018 Volcano Art Prize Entry by Dr Michael Hindmarsh 3rd. Title: 'Blackie' smells Lead. Lead-safety Message: Old Ford Tractor with pale rectangle - its Battery! Cattle are attracted by the Smell! If the Battery is Free they will smash the Case & Lick the Lead. <http://volcanoartprize.com/portfolio-item/blackie-smells-lead/>