September 2011

Dear FL Beef Cattle Producers,

I am the veterinary entomologist for UF-IFAS and am located up in Gainesville. My research and extension program develops and delivers new pest management information to aid in the control of pests of livestock in Florida. We are seeking your help in identifying beef cattle producers who have extensively used the Avenger insecticide ear tag on their cattle.

As many of you know, the horn fly is a difficult pest to control and that insecticide ear tags often no longer protect against this pest or do so for only a few weeks before losing their effectiveness. The Avenger ear tag was introduced a few years ago and represented a whole new type of pesticide for use on beef cattle. However, the horn fly is expected to develop resistance to this chemical as it has most others used against it. This is due to the fact that the horn fly spends its entire adult life touching cattle.

To help you determine if you have horn flies, you can look over your animals for their presence and behavior. Horn flies are the little fly that sits on the backs of the animals in the morning, and moves to their side or belly during the hot afternoons. This blood-sucking pest commonly has numbers that exceed 500 per cow, and 10,000 on a bull, each taking 5-20 bloodmeals a day. If you are seeing flies on fences, barns, feeding areas and other off-animal areas, as well as on the lower legs of the animals, these are not horn flies. The flies that we are interested in testing are those that you see on the body of the cattle, not the legs or face.

I currently have a graduate student, Chris Holderman, conducting a research project on horn fly insecticide resistance. Chris and I are interested in getting a jump on detection of insecticide resistance in horn flies to the chemical endosulfan, which is the active ingredient in the Avenger ear tag. Early resistance detection will be challenging because most of the flies will still be somewhat susceptible and because of this we must choose sites carefully. To effectively do this, we need your help. We are asking that any beef producer who has used the Avenger ear tag in their cattle for several years and especially those producers who believe that the tag does not control the horn flies nearly as well as in the past to contact us through email or telephone. Both of these are provided at the end of this message.

If you are having challenges with control using the Avenger ear tag, and would be willing to let us come to your ranch to collect horn flies (cattle must be brought up to a holding area), please do contact us. Obtaining this information will help in developing insecticide resistance monitoring tools, better help us with pesticide recommendations for inclusion in the EDIS publications we have available so that you know what products work and do not waste your money and to let your local Cooperative Extension county faculty better serve your requests for information.

Thank you,
Phil

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