

Diseases of Cattle

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WOODEN TONGUE

Wooden tongue is an infection caused the rod-shaped bacterium, *Actinobacillus lignieresii*, which lives only in the presence of oxygen . The bacteria, which live in the mouth, invade tissue through breaks in the lining of the mouth. Any rough feed can cause mouth abrasions which allow entry of infection. Wooden tongue occurs almost entirely in soft tissue with the tongue and lymph nodes of the head most often affected. The disease starts suddenly with the tongue becoming hard, swollen and painful. Affected animals drool saliva and may appear to be chewing gently. The tongue often protrudes between the lips and nodules and ulcers may be observed on the tongue. They are unable to eat or drink and rapidly lose condition. The disease is progressive and often fatal unless treated.

It is important to begin treatment early as early treatment is usually successful, but advanced cases may fail to respond. The most common treatments are iodine therapy or tetracyclines. Advanced cases may require surgical drainage and irrigation with iodine solution for several days. Treated animals should be observed regularly, as relapses can occur.

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