ANAPHYLAXIS

Anaphylaxis is an acute allergic reaction to a foreign substance injected into an animal's body. It is something that should be anticipated as possible anytime one sticks a needle into an animal whether for vaccinations or administering antibiotics. An acute anaphylactic reaction can kill an animal in fifteen to thirty minutes, with the animal first showing signs of difficulty in breathing, followed by collapse, generalized shock and death shortly thereafter. It could easily be confused with an animal critically ill with white muscle, severe pneumonia, anaplasmosis, or pulmonary emphysema that might die suddenly following the stress of handling. In all cases, one should treat the animal the same irregardless.

Certain herds will show an increased susceptibility to anaphylaxis either due to inherited factors, previous exposure to the causative substance, or undetermined factors that sensitize the animal. Antibiotics are the largest cause of anaphylaxis, with penicillin the biggest offender and tetracyclains causing problems on certain ranches. Vaccines are usually only a rare problem but may cause sufficient losses at any time. One should be aware that anaphylaxis is considered a normal hazard in the use of antibiotics and vaccines, that all drug bottles have warnings on the label, and that one cannot expect any compensation from the manufacturer due to losses from it.

Anaphylaxis can be easily treated if caught in time. Epinephrine should be given at 1 cc per 100 lbs. body weight either intra muscular or intra venously. This may be repeated in ten to fifteen minutes if necessary. Large doses of cortisone are helpful but may not save the animal if the shock is rapid.

Epinephrine is readily available and should be on hand anytime livestock are being treated with any injectable antibiotic or vaccine. One should also make a habit of watching the animals for at least thirty minutes after such procedures so that any reactions can be treated in time.

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