

SYMPTOMS OF BLACKLEG

Once an animal becomes infected with the Blackleg germ, the disease develops very quickly, the period of incubation being generally about three days. The course and duration of the disease is also very short and may terminate fatally in from one-half to three days. In cattle, the first symptom manifested is usually sudden lameness, in which one or other of the legs is dragged stiffly. Soon thereafter a swelling appears in the region of the thighs and quarters, the neck and shoulder or other parts of the body. The swellings in cases of Blackleg are very characteristic in that they develop rapidly and are at first very hot and painful, and subsequently become less tender and the skin in the centre of the swelling feels cold and becomes dark colored and dry, like a piece of leather. Another striking peculiarity is that when the swollen parts are pressed or handled, they give a crepitant or crackling sound, due to the presence of gas or air in the affected tissues. The various lymphatic glands are also swollen and may be felt under the skin in different parts of the body, in the form of firm lumps about the size of apples. In addition to the swellings and lameness, symptoms of general disturbances become noticeable, such as high fever, labored breathing and rapid beating of the heart. Sometimes attacks of colic are observed. Finally the animal becomes prostrated and lies on the ground stretched out and soon thereafter dies. While the swellings mentioned are essentially characteristic of Blackleg, there are, however, some cases in which the swellings are either not present or may be too deeply situated in the body to be observed, and the only symptoms noticeable are the general constitutional disturbances.

FIRST-MORTEM APPEARANCES OF BLACKLEG

When any cattle are found to have died suddenly at pasture, it is often advisable to examine the carcass to determine the cause. In cases of Blackleg the carcass usually appears to be greatly bloated and a reddish frothy liquid is often seen coming from the mouth, nose and anus. A more or less prominent crepitant, or crackling, swelling may also be noticed anywhere upon the body, but more especially on the rump or other parts of the hind quarters. If the swellings are cut into, the tissues appear a dirty brown or dark red color, and when squeezed a dirty, red colored, frothy liquid containing gas bubbles is pressed out, which has a very offensive, sickly odor.

The tissues surrounding the swellings show an extensive straw colored dropsical appearance. The lymphatic glands near the swellings are much swollen and filled with blood.