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TRI-COUNTY LIVESTOCK NEWSLETTER

Serving residents of Anson, Stanly and Union County

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Upcoming Events

Let's Get Beefy Series

Follow beef cattle from the farm to your kitchen with our Let's Get Beefy Series! In this three part series, you will learn how cattle move through the production system from birth to processing, popular cuts of beef, and how to cook them!

Date: April 6th, 13th, and 20th

Links to register: go.ncsu.edu/on-the-farm
go.ncsu.edu/at-the-processor
go.ncsu.edu/in-the-kitchen

Cow to Cup: Where does my milk come from?

Kick off Dairy Month by learning how your milk gets to the grocery store! In this workshop, participants will learn how milk gets to the grocery store shelves from the very beginning, all the way back to the baby calf! Come see how milk gets from the cow to your cup!

Date: 6/1/21

Link to Register: go.ncsu.edu/cow-to-cup

Piedmont Regional Beef Conference

All virtual this year! Join this four part series covering topics such as Advanced Reproductive Technologies, Warm season forage options, and more!

Date: March 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th

Link to Register: go.ncsu.edu/prbcwebinarsseries21

For any meeting or program listed, persons with disabilities may request accommodations to participate by contacting the Extension Office where the meeting will be held by phone, email, or in person at least 7 days prior to the event.

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Grass Tetany in Cattle

by Rachel Owens

With spring weather comes new grass growth and along with it the potential for grass tetany for cattle. Also called 'grass staggers' this condition is caused by a magnesium deficiency. This deficiency can be caused by a diet low in magnesium or a disruption in the body's ability to process magnesium. It is most often seen in the spring when the grass is rapidly growing.

Fresh, immature forages are lower in magnesium and higher in nitrogen and potassium, which can interfere with magnesium absorption in the rumen. Additionally, spring grass has a high water content which can dilute the nutrient content of the forage. Older animals and animals in early lactation also have higher magnesium requirements and are more susceptible to grass tetany.



Photo credits: Rachael Holzman

Symptoms are often not noticed until the animal is found dead in the pasture. Since this condition affects the nervous system, signs to be on the lookout for include standing away from the herd, a wild stare with alert ears, twitching, incoordination and staggering, followed by collapse, coma, and death. Treatment is only effective in the early stages, within an hour or two of first noticing symptoms. By the time the animal has reached a coma it is typically too late to save them. Treatment usually includes giving an injection of magnesium.

Prevention is the best way to handle grass tetany. Wait to graze pastures until forage height is at least 4-6 inches. Younger more immature forages have less magnesium. Turn out your less susceptible animals, such as stockers, dry cows, and heifers, on higher risk pastures. You can include legumes in your fields such as clover. Legumes have higher magnesium content and can help mitigate grass tetany. Finally, you can offer your herd magnesium supplements during higher risk periods. Magnesium is not stored in the body, so supplementation must be done daily before and during periods of high risk. You can offer magnesium oxide, which is a good source of magnesium. However, it is unpalatable so mix it with something more palatable to encourage consumption. Another option is to offer a 'high mag' mineral free choice.

Grass tetany is considered an emergency and requires immediate medical attention. Prevention is better for your herd than waiting until they need treatment. Be aware of what causes grass tetany and be ready to supplement your herd during periods of higher risk.

Spring Pasture Management

by Kinsey Everhart

Spring is quickly approaching so now is a good time to start thinking about your spring pastures. Getting a head start on management can do a world of difference for your pastures when summer and fall roll around.

Soil Testing

The best place to start is with fertility.

If you have not tested your soils within the last 3 years do so before applying amendments. Testing supplies are available

at your local Cooperative Extension Office. Apply fertilizer and lime according to a soil test. When you start making amendment to your pastures, start with lime and pH management because it is one of the most critical steps. Lime can be applied any time during the year. It will take 6-12 months to react in the soil, so if you are reseeding, plan ahead. Nitrogen is notorious for not sticking around long so timing of application is important. Nitrogen can be applied to established during spring green-up, but if your pastures are sparse or mostly weeds, you should work on establishing more grass before applying N. This nitrogen will jump-start grass growth. Split your nitrogen into 2 or 3 applications.

Weed Control

Weeds can reduce pasture quality and yield and have the potential to cause injury or death to livestock or equine. Spring is a great time to kill summer annual weeds while they are small and tender. They are seedlings in the spring and die in the fall. It is best to identify the weed and select an herbicide that is effective on that plant. If you need help identifying a weed, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office. If using an herbicide, make sure to read labels carefully and follow all requirements.

Grazing Management

Have a grazing plan! Rotational grazing can be a great method to keeping your pastures in good shape. It helps control weeds, promote fast regrowth, and reduce parasite consumption. By leaving enough stubble the plant has enough energy to regrow quickly. This promotes a canopy that shades out weeds and keeps animals from eating close to the ground, consuming parasite eggs.

Sound management will help you keep a healthy stand for years to come. With a few management practices, pastures can be very productive and provide nutrition for your livestock and horses. Please contact your local Extension Center for more information or help with pasture recommendations.

Recommended Planting Dates for Common Forages

Bermudagrass, Broadcast or drilled: April 15- May 15

Bermudagrass, Sprigs: March 1-March 31

Crabgrass: May 1- May 31

Pearl Millet: May 1- May 31

Sorghum-Sudan: May 1- May 31



Preventing Heat Stress

by Katelyn Stegall

While it's still a little early to be concerned with long stretches of very high temperatures, we've seen these past few days that warmer weather is coming! It is never too early in the spring to start talking about heat stress because, as they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When the temperature rises above 70 degrees, it is time to start paying special attention to your cattle to make sure that they are not feeling the effects of the heat. Heat stressed cattle result in production losses to the producer, as well as lasting effects on the cattle.



Identifying Heat Stress

It is very important that a cattle producer is able to tell when his or her cattle are heat stressed. The most obvious sign of heat stress is increased rate of respiration (rapid breathing), followed by open mouthed breathing and panting and drooling. Cattle that are more seriously heat stressed will potentially tremble and lose coordination. Heat stress can also resort in less obvious issues such as reproductive problems like increased losses in the first few weeks after conception, and lower semen quality in bulls under heat stress.

Heat Abatement Strategies

Avoid too much activity- Avoiding things like moving, handling, processing, and transporting cattle is a must when it comes to heat abatement. If cattle need to be moved or handled in any way, especially in the hottest months, it should be done early in the morning or later in the evening when the temperatures are the lowest.

Provide Shade- Shade is important, especially for darker cattle. Shade for cattle can be achieved easily. Access to pasture with trees or open access to barns or buildings can be great for shading cattle.

Provide Water- When temperatures are higher, so is the water requirement for cattle. Additional water sources should be given if possible. Water tanks should be checked frequently to make sure that there are no issues that may be prohibiting the tanks from filling all the way, and to make sure that there is nothing that may be hindering cattle from getting the proper amount of water.

Avoid groups/holding pens- If possible, avoid penning cattle together in groups when they do not have room to space out. When cattle are made to stand grouped together, they will not be able to dissipate heat as well. If cattle must be grouped and held together in the heat, try to provide something like fans or water misters to help keep them cool.

Watch cattle closely- One of the most important things that you can do to avoid heat stress is to watch your cattle closely and look for any abnormality. Recognizing signs early and cooling the cattle off as soon as possible will give your cattle the best chance of a full recovery from a heat stress episode.

****These same strategies can be applied to avoid heat stress in small ruminants. While they can handle slightly higher temperatures than cattle, it is still important to make sure that they are not getting over heated!**