

Weekly Article

Prevention of Grass Tetany Start Now

3-9-2021

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of Agriculture. What a change March has brought for Southern Ohio, a pleasant change at that. With plenty of sun and nice dry winds, the ground is drying out and giving farmers a chance to get some late winter and early spring chores done. Many producers have taken advantage of the nice weather, starting to frost seed clover, apply manure, and even start applying fertilizer or lime on the fields. With this break in the weather and next 10–15-day outlook featuring daytime temperatures in the mid-50s to low-60's it won't be long the grass will be growing lush and green. It is comforting to see a nice lush green pasture. That new spring grass can be a hazard though, for producer's spring calving already calved.

Grass Tetany is also referred to as grass staggers or spring staggers and is caused by a low level of magnesium in the animal's blood. Magnesium plays a crucial role in transmitting nerve impulses throughout the body and muscle control. Magnesium is stored in bones and teeth of the animal and is critical that the animal receives an adequate amount daily to supply the body. Symptoms of Grass tetany starts with a change in the animal's behavior or disposition, nervousness, flighty and muscle twitching are all first signs. As grass tetany progresses the animal will lose balance or begin to stagger eventually falling on their side and paddle with their front legs. At this point the death will result quickly from respiratory failure. The time frame in which this takes place is very rapid- 4-8 hours. Treatment of grass tetany can be successful only if caught early, magnesium and calcium solutions can be administered intravenously which will resupply the animal's blood with magnesium. The best method is prevention, here are some steps taken now while the grass is still young that can alleviate stress later this spring:

- Know which animals are at high risk- Cows nursing calves 4 months or younger are at the most risk. Older females are at high risk than younger heifers.
- Have an adequate mineral program- High risk animals need to be supplemented well in advance to growing grass. Mineral mix offered free choice should contain 12-15% magnesium from magnesium oxide.
- Start supplementing early- offering supplemental mineral two weeks or earlier before grass begins to grow is recommended.
- Mix with other supplements- mixing minerals with grain can encourage consumption.

- Avoid high applications of nitrogen to pastures early in the season- Plants containing high amounts of nitrogen will have lower amounts of magnesium.
- Test the soil- soils low in calcium, magnesium and high in potassium are high risk factors for grass tetany. Applications of dolomitic lime can increase calcium and magnesium levels of the soils.

Some other details to go over:

- March 15 is the deadline to enroll in 4-H for 2021 go to oh.4honline.com if you have a child interested in enrolling.
- March 15th is the deadline to sign up for the 2021 Farm Bill safety net programs including ARC-CO, PLC, and ARC-IC. If you have questions, give me a call, and call the FSA office to sign up at (937) 544-2033.
- CRP Grasslands signup will begin March 15th,2021 and conclude April 23rd,2021 contact the farm service agency for assistance in signing up for these programs.
- March 15th is the deadline to Purchase Noninsured Crop Disaster Program (NAP) coverage through the local Farm service Agency (FSA). This provide covers losses from natural disasters for crops not covered by federal crop Insurance. This includes spring planted specialty crops grown for food use. Contact the FSA office at (937) 544 -2033 opt 2 for details.
- Ohio Beef Expo is a go and yes, it is in person, March 17th -March 21st at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus Ohio. Go to ohiobeefexpo.com to learn more.
- Thursday, March 25 – Live online Private Pesticide (AM) and Fertilizer (PM) Recertification Webinars. To register for this training opportunity, you can go to <https://pested.osu.edu/OnlineRecertPrivate#PrivateRecertReg>

From the field

- Winter wheat, rye, and other small grains are beginning to break dormancy.
- Invasive species such as Autumn olive, multiflora rose are beginning to bud.
- Winter annuals such as common chickweed, purple deadnettle have broke dormancy and will begin to flower soon.
- Manure applications are taking place.
- Frost Seeding clover (good time to get that done!)
- Spring calving in full swing some producers are finished.
- winter lambing season wrapping up.