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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Grass Tetany and Your Mineral Program

As we begin the month of February, it will not be long until pastures will begin to green up, and the temptation will be there to turn livestock out to graze. We are a few weeks away from that, but it is not too early to evaluate your mineral program. This is especially true with the recent warm days that we have had in January and early February. It seems grass is already showing some signs of greening up.

A good mineral program is essential for healthy, productive brood cows. There are several minerals needed to maintain cows and keep things working correctly. There are Macro and Micro minerals needed in the diet that most of the commercial minerals will provide. The trick is not necessarily buying the right mineral, though there are differences that you need to pay attention to as you select the mineral that best fits the needs of your herd. Several companies will offer programs that explain their mineral, and what it provides. Check with your feed store, or other local stores, to see if they have any upcoming programs.

I said before, that buying the right mineral is not necessarily the trick. The trick is providing it to the cows at the right time of the year in adequate amounts. This time of year, as we envision the spring flush of grass, we need to provide a mineral that will be high in magnesium. When grass is lush and growing rapidly in the spring, the grass is full of water, and can be lacking in some things that the animal needs. The situation is more of an issue for older cows that have a calf at their side. So if you have mature cows with spring calves and your pasture is made up of nearly all grass, you need to provide a mineral high in magnesium. This is not like you going out on the first sunny day and applying sunscreen just a few minutes before being exposed to the sun to prevent sunburn. In order to provide the cows with adequate magnesium levels to greatly reduce the risk of grass tetany, the mineral should be provided to the cows a few weeks in advance. Also, by introducing some legumes into the pasture, you can reduce the risk of grass tetany and reduce the need for commercial nitrogen.

I am sure that most every producer keeps a loose mineral available to cattle, just as nearly every nutritionist recommends, so all you really need to do is check the label on the mineral you are using, and then look at the bag. Most companies will have a list, chart, or even pictures of the different minerals that they offer. Most of them will even have suggestions about what time of the year they recommend using the specific blend. Look for the recommendation on the bag or call your feed store to see what they offer for grass tetany prevention. Remember by providing the higher magnesium a few weeks prior to the spring flush you will give the cows adequate time to take in enough of what they need to reduce the chances of grass tetany, which can cause them to stagger, or in severe cases can be fatal.

Frost Seeding Clover

After the record setting rainfall in 2018 and still well above normal rainfall in 2019, pasture fields may need a boost. Frost seeding in February is a common practice. Many farm supply stores run special prices for seed in February. Check with your local dealer so you are ready in a the coming weeks.



Frost seeding can be done to improve pastures or hayfields. Pastures that were over grazed during the dry period in August and September may need to be improved. This is an option that might fit your situation. If the pastures were grazed close last fall, and the existing forages are bunch type grasses, there is a good chance you have open areas where an over seeding of clover would have a good opportunity for seed to make contact with bare soil. This seed to soil contact is essential for germination.

By introducing clover, and in this we are talking Red Clover, you can improve the pasture or hayfield by increasing the quality of forage with the clover itself. Plus you can increase the nitrogen available to grasses in the field, as clover is a legume that will produce nitrogen that can be utilized by the grasses. An added bonus as we head into spring is with more legumes in the pastures you decrease the risk of grass tetany issues in the future. Did I mention another benefit could be fewer weeds in the fields? If the clover is established in the bare or open areas, this competition should reduce the opportunity for weeds. The cost of the seed can easily offset the cost of nitrogen fertilizer.

Keep in mind if the pasture is weak because of fertility issues, this is NOT a fix. A soil test is always recommended to get a better idea of the current soil fertility. The cost of the seed and your time is worth more than the cost of the soil test. If the test results come back poor, it would be best to fix that issue this year with plans to seed next year.

Earlier I mentioned the risk of doing damage to the soil with the ground being wet. It is raining this week, but hopefully you can get on the ground again in the coming weeks. The idea of frost seeding has been that you may be able to do the seeding when the ground is frozen. Today, with more and more farmers using ATVs or 4-wheelers in the farming operation, these are good for applying seed. The tracts and compaction is far less using a 4-wheeler compared to a tractor. A spinner seeder can be used on either a tractor or 4-wheeler to apply the seed with the idea that as the soil freezes and thaws during February, the soil gets a “honeycomb” look. This will aid in the seed and soil contact by taking the seed into the ground, thus improving the opportunity for a successful seeding.

The rate of red clover that is normally recommended suggests using around 6 pounds per acre. For more information there are several publications available online from Ohio State University Extension, the University of Kentucky and other Land Grant Universities.

Dates to Remember

- Feb. 9 Twelfth Annual Buy Local Foods Seminar in Georgetown at St George Catholic Church. Program starts at 1:45 p.m. If you have questions contact Julie Kline at 937 515-1807 or Patrick Hornschemeier at 513 752-0647. Refer to my column the week of January 20 for details.
- Feb. 10 Pesticide Exams at the Old Y Restaurant at noon. Pre-register at <http://pested.osu.edu> or call 800-282-1955.
- Feb. 18 2020 Agronomic Outlook Meeting from 8:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at Southern State Community College on Brooks Malott Road. You must pre-register and the deadline to

pre-register is February 10. Call 937-378-6716 to register for this event that is being sponsored by Bio Gene and your cost is only \$15.

- Feb. 19 GAP for tobacco growers at Frisch's in West Union starts at 1:00 p.m. Pre-register by calling the OSU Extension Office in Adams County at 544-2339 or Brown County at 378-6716 by Feb. 17.
- Feb. 19 Brown Co. Master Gardener Program at Southern State Community College in Mt. Orab. Program is Starting Seeds with Float Beds and it starts at 7:00 p.m. Yes, this is a Wednesday program, as the schedule has changed.