

NEWS COLUMN

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Prussic Acid Poisoning in Forage

Prussic acid is a potent, fast acting poison frequently killing grazing livestock within a few minutes. Often the animals will be found dead. Clinical signs occur very rapidly and may include difficult breathing, staggering and convulsions. The blood becomes a bright cherry red and often clots slowly or not at all.

Prussic acid poisoning is most often associated with sorghum and sudan grass. It can also occur in Johnson grass, flax, birds foot trefoil, white clover, chokecherry, wild cherry and black elder berry. Danger of this type of poisoning is greatest at immature stages of growth and decreases with maturity.

Frost causes plant cells to rupture allowing prussic acid to be released. If there is a potential before a frost, then the danger of poisoning is very great while the plant is frozen and a week or two following.

Consequently, it is not advisable to graze sorghum, sudan grass or other plants previously listed during or several days (10-14 days) following a hard freeze unless you are absolutely sure there is no potential for prussic acid poisoning to occur.

Curing, chopping or ensiling feeds reduces the problem, however, be sure to wait a week or so after chopping to feed these forages.

Still Time For Weed Control

Fall is a good time for getting a head start on weeds for next year. Fall herbicide applications to weed infested pastures, waterways, fence lines and even lawns can go a long way to reducing weed populations for next years growing season. Even after a couple killing frosts attainable weed reduction can be realized. The key is having adequate active growth after a weed has been weakened, the next 2-3 weeks may still present this scenario. With a little sunshine and highs in the low 60's spray applications are yet possible.

It is best to select the treatment to fit the weed and site. Spot treatments are best for small areas. Higher rates are more costly however research shows an 80-95% reduction when used. SDSU fact sheet FS525N, noxious weed control gives a complete guide for rates, cost, restrictions and expected results. Copies are available at your local Extension Office or at the SDSU web site http://pubstorage.sdstate.edu/AgBio_Publications/articles/FS525N.pdf.

Corn Must Be 85 Percent Dry Matter For Storage

Producers should make sure their corn tests at 85 percent dry matter or higher before considering long-term storage. Just a quick reminder to crop producers that corn stored with moisture levels higher than 15 percent will mold, spoil, and bridge.

Steve Pohl and Dick Nicolai, Extension Ag Engineers at SDSU and McCook County Extension Educator Heather Gessner discuss the costs of drying and storing corn in a new publication for SDSU Extension. SDSU Extension Extra 5056, "The Cost of Wet Corn at Harvest," is available at no cost from county Extension Offices.

Or find it online at http://pubstorage.sdstate.edu/AgBio_Publications/articles/ExEx5056.pdf.

The four-page publication discusses heat drying on the farm, natural bin air drying, combination drying, and dock due to shrinkage charged by elevators. There are examples to help producers calculate their costs under different situations.