

A Few Precautions Help Prevent Bloat In Cattle

SPRINGFIELD, MO.

Exceptional amounts of rain and cool weather have resulted in an abundance of clover in southwest Missouri pastures this spring according to Eldon Cole, University of Missouri Extension livestock specialist.

For the most part, the clover and other legumes are a good thing and should enhance weight gains and milk production.

“They are also helpful in reducing the incidence of fescue toxicosis symptoms as they dilute the level of the toxin consumed by the cattle,” said Cole.

According to Cole, excellent legume stands can cause some concern about the risk of bloat. The two legumes most often associated with bloat are alfalfa and ladino clover with some risk from red clover. Lespedeza, hop clover and birdsfoot trefoil are considered non-bloating legumes.

“Even though bloat is a risk on the fresh, lush legume, it seldom results in serious problems like death or the need to surgically relieve the

pressure on the animal. We usually tell concerned farmers that by following a few precautions they should be able to safely graze their pastures,” said Cole.

The precautions include: filling the cattle with dry hay before turning them in on a high percentage legume pasture; turning cattle in only after the dew or overnight rain is off the forage; once the cattle are on the legume pasture, leaving them instead of moving them in and out; observing cattle closely during their first introduction to the pasture because some animals bloat more easily than others.

Another helpful tool in bloat prevention is poloxalene. It is a feed additive that is in various supplements and should be fed several days before turning the cattle on the pasture.

“The risk to cost ratio would need to be considered by the owner as it is to be fed during the time the cattle are grazing high-risk pastures. Cost per day for light weight yearlings could run as little as 10 cents or around a quarter per cow for 1,200 pound animals,” said Cole. Δ