

Topic of the Month

Mycotoxins

This was a tough year on a lot of counts, and feed production was certainly one of them. Given the wet conditions and the difficulty filling and packing silos, bunks, and trenches, we can expect a bad year for mycotoxins.

Here's the thing. The term "mycotoxin" gets thrown around a lot without an appreciation for what it actually means. Mycotoxins are chemicals produced by molds that cause effects in our cattle ranging from reduced feed intake and decreased production to illness to reduced fertility.

Typically, crop work is done to decrease the occurrence of molds and associated toxins, but sometimes (for example, this year), that is difficult or impossible. The rumen is also somewhat effective in reducing mycotoxin effects. Because of the fermentation process in the rumen, many mycotoxins are partially degraded, however, in the presence of overwhelming toxin levels, their effects will still be seen.

Nutritionists also use binders to tie up mycotoxins. They can be expensive, but they can also be effective. One point to be aware of is that there are many different mycotoxins. On a molecular level, their structures are very different. So a binder may tie up a particular toxin and be totally ineffective against another toxin. To my knowledge, none of these binders has been approved by the FDA for this purpose.

This is a good time to start discussions with your nutritionist about what type of mycotoxins might be present in your feed and then develop a strategy for how to deal with them.

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of November 30, 2018

Corn	\$3.66/bu
Soybean Meal	\$308.30/ton
Milk (Class III)	\$13.98/cwt
Beef (Live cattle)	\$116.93/cwt

Practice News

- In addition to concerns about mycotoxins, the wet summer has allowed parasites to thrive. We have been treating many cases of parasites recently, even though it is already cold. It seems that heavy parasite burdens have decreased fat stores and the cold temperatures create problems for animals that have been able to handle the parasites to this point. If your heifers, fresh cows, or pasture-based animals look unthrifty, consider checking a manure sample for parasites. It is a cheap diagnostic tool that will pay off big.
- In observance of Christmas day and New Year's day, the office will be closed on Tuesday, December 25 and Tuesday, January 1. Herd checks will be rescheduled as needed. We will be open for sick calls until noon on Monday, December 24 and Monday December 31, although the office will not be staffed and calls will be routed through the answering service on these days.
- Dr. Croushore and Dr. Zawisza continue to write columns in the *Daily American* and *Farm, Field, and Garden* newspapers, respectively. You can subscribe by contacting the *Daily American* circulation department.
- In case you missed it...Dr. Croushore has published his first book. It is a 250 page compilation of articles he authored in the *Daily American* and is titled, "Oops,...and other Words You Don't Like to Hear Your Surgeon Say". It will be available for purchase for \$16.95 (plus tax) at the office, the *Daily American*, other retailers and at www.madeinsomersetcounty.com. At the risk of sounding presumptuous, signed copies are available upon request.

Upcoming Events

- The 103rd Pennsylvania Farm Show will take place January 5-12, 2019 at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg. Admission is free and parking is \$15. Each year, the farm show features over 6,000 animals and, many exhibits and displays, and the famous half-ton butter sculpture.