

Lawrence County Livestock Newsletter

Well it seems like ole man winter might be loosening its grip and spring could possibly be just around the corner. To be perfectly honest, we have had a rather mild winter compared to the last few years. This mild weather, however, can present its own unique challenges.

It is common knowledge for producers to put out Hi-Mag mineral each spring to prevent grass tetany. In this newsletter, I want to talk about another condition that can be seen in the spring. This condition is known as frothy bloat.

Frothy bloat is a preventable disease in cattle that are grazing high-quality pastures such as clovers, alfalfa, and wheat. These forages are very high in proteins and sugars that, when digested, are rapidly released in the rumen. When these plants have undergone a freeze that ruptures the plant tissues they are released even more rapidly. This causes bloat to happen even quicker.

Frothy bloat is caused by stable foam that is produced in the rumen as the forage is digested. This

foam traps gas in the upper area of the rumen, covering the esophageal orifice preventing gas to escape via normal belching patterns. Death occurs fairly quickly because the gas builds pressure that puts pressure on the animal's diaphragm and lungs thereby suffocating the animal.

Since frothy bloat is a condition caused by ingestion of high quality forages, there are some grazing management alternatives that can be used to decrease the incidence of bloat. Some of these techniques can include:

OVERSTOCKING: Frothy bloat is an issue for cattle that are able to graze large amounts of these high quality forages in a short period of time. Because of this, overstocking cattle on pastures to a point that forage intake is limited has been used in the past.

ROTATIONAL GRAZING- Placing cattle on pasture that has been allowed to accumulate sufficient growth and maturity and then rotate cattle. This will increase the fiber content of the forages and limit the bloat-provocative forage.



Figure 1. Bloated calf. Viewing the calf from the rear, left side distended indicating bloat.

FEEDING HAY: It has been suggested to feed low quality hay or straw to animals grazing high quality forage to decrease bloat. This is done to supplement the amount of fiber in their diet in order to increase ruminal contractions, therefore, reducing bloat. According to research done on calves grazing wheat pasture this has not offered any benefits, possibly because of low intake.

NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS: Research conducted in Oklahoma and New Mexico indicates that the ionophore monensin decreases the incidence and severity of bloat for calves grazing wheat pasture. This option is attractive because producers can increase average daily gains by as much as 10-15% for a cost of about \$0.03 per day above the cost of the carrier supplement. In New Mexico, it was found that feeding steam-flaked milo with 170mg of monensin per day to calves grazing irrigated wheat pasture in early April decreased the incidence of frothy bloat by 40% due to increased ruminal pH, forage digestibility, and fluid passage rate from the rumen.

POLOXALENE: Poloxalene is a surfactant that works to disrupt the froth which can form in the rumen causing bloat. Research shows that monensin can work to prevent bloat but poloxalene works better. Studies have indicated that poloxalene used at 1 to 2 g per 100 lbs. of bodyweight per day dramatically reduces the incidence of bloat. In a self-fed supplement it can cost from \$0.15-\$0.20 per calf per day depending on the cost of the supplement.

To combat this cost a producer may want to consider feeding monensin until you have a confirmed bloat issue, then switching to poloxalene once cattle show signs of bloat. If poloxalene is fed only during the period that forages are most bloat-provocative, then the total cost of bloat control can be justified by the prevention of the loss of just one single animal.

Cattle producers do not have to live with the threat of bloat, there are options that they can consider. The options make good economic sense you just simply need to find a plan the best fits in with your production goals.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lawrence/ Randolph County Cattlemen's Association meeting in May will feature Jason Davis as the guest speaker. Jason is the application technologist for the University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. He will be discussing the ins and outs of spraying in a pasture setting, calibration, etc. Please call me if you plan to attend and would like him to cover a certain subject.

Lawrence County annual spring brucellosis vaccinations will take place on Wednesday April 13th. If you want on the list please call the office 886-3741 and let us know by Friday April 8th.. You will be notified on April 12th of the approximate time to expect us.

The University of Arkansas Livestock and Forestry Research Station will be hosting their annual field day at the research station on Tuesday April 19th, 2016. The program will start at 10 AM. The presentations for the day will cover Breeding and Feeding. Some of the topics that will be discussed will include: Castration, current tools in beef cattle breeding, improving weight gain on cattle on fescue pasture, and optimal mineral program for your herd. For a full list of presentations given please give me a call. For more information on anything that I have talked about in this newsletter please call Bryce Baldrige at the Lawrence County Extension Office at 886-3741.