

As cattle producers it is important to be aware of the different diseases and factors that can negatively affect your cattle. Often when doing this the most common issues or diseases thought of are those where obvious symptoms present themselves early on, such as a limping cow or an abscess on a jaw. However, some of the most critical issues and diseases to be cognizant of are those that proceed in a gradual or subtle way and leave harmful effects. For the next weeks we will explore a handful of insidious diseases, and offer tips for detecting and preventing these silent killers from affecting your herd.

The first insidious disease we want to discuss is one we have touched on before, yet it continues to wreak havoc in cattle operations- acorn toxicity. Acorn toxicity poses the biggest threat when cattle are in pastures not suitable for ample grazing. When quality forage is scarce, the cattle will begin searching for an alternate food source. Unfortunately, if oak trees are prevalent in those pastures, the cattle will find their "alternate food source" in acorns. This is harmful because the acorns contain a toxic agent known as tannins, which cause health problems in cattle. High consumption of tannin-filled acorns can result in a lack of appetite, dark colored diarrhea, and constipation. Because acorn toxicity takes a gradual, subtle toll on an animal, you may not detect an issue until it is too late to correct. As the disease worsens, the animal will begin to show signs of kidney failure such as dehydration, weakness, and weight loss.

Although acorn consumption affects each animal differently, and may have no effect at all on some cattle, it is something that should be avoided if at all possible. Remember that high risk pastures are those that are short of grass with high amounts of oak trees. You should also note that yearlings and older cattle are the most susceptible to acorn toxicity. If you have high risk pastures and these kinds of cattle, it is best to not allow those susceptible cattle into those pastures. If your forage quality/quantity is low, you may choose to fence off the oak trees to restrict access, or completely remove the cattle from the high risk pasture. If neither of these options is feasible, it may be helpful to feed the cattle cubes and/or provide them with a good quality hay. This will increase the cattle's protein consumption, which should in turn decrease their acorn consumption, thus reducing their risk for contracting an acorn toxicity.

With fall just around the corner, we encourage you to keep acorn toxicity and its risks in the forefront of your mind. Are you taking the necessary precautions to prevent this insidious disease from affecting your operation? For more on acorn toxicity prevention, or for help treating an animal with acorn toxicity, please contact us.

The Oklahoma National Stockyard prices for feeder steers medium and large 1 sold on Tuesday, August 2, 2016 are as follows: 497lb- \$162.87, 585lb- \$155.77, 679lb- \$149.91, and 780lb- \$145.18. The price for September 2016 feeder steers on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange was \$143 on closing Tuesday, August 2, 2016.

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