



Purina Mills

CheckpointTM

Management & Nutrition
Tips For Beef Producers



GAINING THE UPPER HAND ON GRASS TETANY

Grass tetany, sometimes called grass staggers or hypomagnesemia, can be a serious health problem for cattle grazing lush, green, rapidly growing grasses.

While it is generally considered to be more a problem during spring when grasses are abundant and growing at a rapid pace, it should be considered a risk regardless of season, according to University of Nebraska information.¹

The problem is usually confined to lactating cows. It is always associated with an imbalance in the mineral components of blood serum, especially reduced magnesium levels, according to extension forage specialists at the University of Florida². Low potassium levels in the forage also have been associated with grass tetany.

The symptoms of hypomagnesemia include nervousness, lack of coordination, muscular spasms, staggering and death. When the disease is suspected, a veterinarian should be called immediately to diagnose and to initiate treatment.

PREVENTING GRASS TETANY

University of Florida extension cattle experts suggest the following to help you prevent grass tetany².

- Feed mineral supplements that contain magnesium. Commercial mineral mixtures containing 10 percent to 15 percent magnesium are available for feeding during periods of increased grass tetany probability. Cattle need to consume 6 to 12 ounces per head per day of this mineral.
- In herds that have had previous grass tetany problems, increase the supplementation to 0.5 to 1 ounce of magnesium per cow per day from two weeks before grazing winter pasture or the start of calving until winter pastures are more mature and the grass tetany risk is reduced.

- In herds with clinical cases of grass tetany, increase the magnesium intake to 1 to 2 ounces per head daily and continue this amount until the high risk pasture grazing period is past.
- Feed high magnesium minerals in mineral feeders placed at convenient locations around the pasture. Move mineral feeders closer to watering and resting areas if mineral consumption is low.
- Check the calcium to phosphorus ratio (2:1 is optimum), and energy intake (maintenance or above is desired) of the animal. Grass tetany may be less likely to occur when these factors are near optimum.
- Remove animals from pasture or limit their grazing during periods of rapid grass growth. Allow access to hay or dry pasture.

University of Nebraska (NU) cattle experts agree that the most effective management strategy to address grass tetany is to prevent it¹. One method they suggest to minimize the risk is to delay turnout until forage is more mature and past the rapid growth stage.

SUPPLEMENTING MAGNESIUM

A more common management strategy to prevent grass tetany involves supplementing magnesium while the cattle are grazing higher risk forages, say the NU cattle specialists. Cattle should receive at least 0.5 to 2 ounces of supplemental magnesium per head per day to prevent tetany.

Experts suggest the most practical means of supplementing magnesium under range or pasture conditions is through a high magnesium block, tub or mineral mix. Supplemental magnesium can also be added in combination with a protein supplement, silage, or a liquid.



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DOUBLE R CATTLE COMPANY TAKES OPTIMISTIC VIEW

Jim and Ryan Raney believe that despite current challenges, the future is bright for those committed to beef production for the long haul.

"I think the future of the beef business is brighter than ever," says Jim Raney, who with son, Ryan, own and operate Double R Cattle Co., a diversified beef enterprise near Jamesport, Mo.

"The people who stay in the beef business are going to be well rewarded at some point," says Raney. "I don't know exactly when that will be, but I think it should be in the not-too-distant future."

THREE BUSINESS UNITS

Double R Cattle Co. has been in existence since 1993. The operation is divided into three business units—purebred cattle production, calf backgrounding, and a hay production operation.

Raney explains that the purebred segment specializes in the production of Simmental and Angus bulls and females. "We have an annual production sale in October where we market our females and a few of our top bulls. We sell the rest of the bulls by private treaty in the spring after they have come off a short bull test."

They start selling the private-treaty bulls toward the end of February and continue selling bulls until June. They also sell bulls in Kansas at the Kansas State Bull Sale in Beloit.

While the 45 to 50 bulls sold annually are primarily purebred Simmental and Angus, Double R has more recently started to market an increasing number of crossbred bulls because the industry is demanding more of these, says Raney. "It's been well documented that there is an advantage to having crossbred bulls because they contain the hybrid vigor needed and they are a better doing, more efficient type of cattle."

Double R's calf backgrounding enterprise handles 1,500 head per year. Many of the calves that are backgrounded are purchased from customers who have previously purchased Double R bulls.

The hay production business puts up "a considerable amount of small square bales" for sale, Raney says. Last year, for example, Double R sold 13,000 bales.

One of the biggest challenges in the cattle business today is high input costs, according to Raney. "The cost of doing business has climbed dramatically the last couple of years so you have to raise cattle that convert feed more efficiently. You need to use your grass more efficiently and to a greater extent."

QUALITY FORAGE CRITICAL

Quality forage is a critical element for the success of all three business elements of Double R, says Raney.

Raney explains that "we try to run our cattle on stockpiled forages as much as we can. We try to rotate pasture so that the cattle can do as much grazing as possible."



While they do not utilize an intensive grazing system yet, Ryan is currently involved in doing research about intensive grazing to determine the economic feasibility of developing such a program. "With intensive grazing, we think we would be able to run more cattle per acre," he says. "Of course, it would require more labor, but it would be a lot more efficient."

PURINA NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Double R has, from its inception in 1993, utilized Purina cattle nutrition programs designed to extract the most value possible from forage resources. These programs help to improve cattle performance in all life stages, and at the same time enhance forage utilization.

"We have used most all their products," says Jim. "Our relationship with our dealer (Hoffman-Reed Inc., Trenton, Mo.) has really been important to us. They've really been a big supporter of ours ever since we have been in business."

"We've weaned cattle and continue to wean cattle on the Impact® Starter and it has certainly proven to us that it's a good way to go in terms of getting those calves weaned with as little health problems as possible."

"We've used the Impact® Beef Grower and Accuration® to develop our bulls that we have on test and are sold in the spring. These products have done a good job." These nutrition products feature Purina's exclusive IM Intake Modifying Technology® that optimizes nutrient intake throughout the day through multiple small snacks. IM Intake Modifying Technology® virtually eliminates the chance that cattle will over-consume the feed.

Purina representatives, including Purina cattle nutritionist Dr. N.T. Cosby, have helped Double R with development of bull rations and rations for feeder calves, among other things.

"If you have any question or any problem at all, all you have to do is pick up the phone and give them a call and they will be here as soon as possible to help you out. We have called them numerous times."



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Quick Tips for Controlling Flies

Now is the time to map out your fly control program.

Horn flies normally begin showing up in spring when average daily temperatures reach 65° F for a period of two weeks. They remain a nuisance until cool weather in late fall or early winter.

Here are four quick tips to help you develop an integrated management program for controlling horn flies in your cattle enterprise:

1. Clean and remove fly breeding media in confined areas.
2. Use premise sprays to kill flies in shelter and shade areas.
3. Use pour-on, spray-on, or rub-on insecticides, insecticide dusts, or ear tags to control adult flies on animals.
4. Use feed or supplemental mineral products containing an Insect Growth Regulator (IGR) such as Altosid® (brand name for methoprene). This type of feed additive passes through an animal's digestive system relatively unchanged. It remains effective in the manure, where it stops development of immature horn flies before they emerge as adult flies.

Altosid is available in select Purina products with the MTH designation.

These products are available as both free-choice minerals and Cattle Chow products.

Feed and supplemental mineral products that contain Altosid work best if they are fed in spring prior to the appearance of flies and continued until cold weather restricts fly activity in late fall.

CATTLE NEED MORE THAN GREEN PASTURES

Even though pastures look green and lush in spring and early summer, grass production alone might not be able to meet all your cattle's nutritional needs.

Most grasses are just beginning to grow after being dormant during winter and do not produce enough volume to meet the animals' nutritional requirements.

Spring forage growth can be quite rapid and the plants are utilizing carbohydrates for growth rather than storage.

Beef forage experts suggest that you keep in mind these three things to help keep your pastures productive:

- Match animal requirements with your forage supply.
- Rotate animals to different pastures frequently.
- Try to delay grazing of perennial pastures in the spring if possible.

Even with good management, forage quality naturally declines as the growing season progresses.

FEEDING SUPPLEMENTS

Feeding supplements is a proven method to improve production efficiency even when forage quality is declining. Among other things, supplementing can provide the needed nutrients--lacking in lower quality forage--that will enable the cow's rumen microbes to perform more efficiently in digesting lower quality forage.

This, in turn, helps to increase forage intake and the nutrients available to the cow, resulting in more efficient use of available forage sources and enhanced forage digestibility.

The balanced mineral, protein and energy contained in a quality Purina Mills branded supplement, for example, can improve forage utilization, helping you to receive more value and profit potential from your beef enterprise.

Purina researchers have developed controlled intake beef cattle nutrition systems built on Purina's exclusive IM Technology™ (Intake Modifying Technology).

These systems include:

- **Accuration® /Cattle Limiter**—Designed specifically for cow/heifer development, growing stockers or yearlings, bull conditioning prior to breeding, bull development, and creep feeding. This system is delivered in a dry meal that is generally fed in a bulk feeder.
- **Sup-R-Lix®**—Designed specifically for the cow and bull, heifer development, and growing stockers or yearlings. This system is delivered in a liquid form that is usually fed in lick wheel feeders.
- **Sup-R-Block®**—Designed for the cow and bull, heifer development and growing stockers or yearlings. This system was introduced as the first weather-proof block that requires no feeder or equipment.
- **Impact®**—Designed for starting, growing, and finishing cattle. This system is delivered in complete feeds or concentrates to be mixed with your feedstuffs and provide intake modification, whether fed free-choice in bulk feeders, or in well managed bunks.

Purina's IM Intake Modifying Technology® causes cattle to consume multiple small snacks daily of the supplement. This optimizes the flow of nutrients to the digestive system, thereby increasing forage intake, overall utilization, and cattle performance.

IM Technology also can increase the amount of time your cattle spend grazing and help to improve grazing distribution so your cattle utilize all of the pasture, rather than only a part of it.

Purina's cattle nutrition systems also can lower your feed delivery costs, compared with that incurred by hand feeding.

Contact your Purina dealer today for more information on these controlled intake cattle nutrition systems with IM Technology. Your dealer can help you develop a nutrition program for your specific production situation that will help you produce cattle as efficiently as possible.



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SPRING COW-CALF MANAGEMENT REMINDERS

Here are some general cow-calf management reminders for the spring months. This information has been adapted from the “Beef Cow Herd Calendar”¹ developed by the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service.

MAY

- Implement a fly and tick control program for all cattle.
- If adequate new growth is available, warm season grasses can, in most situations, provide all nutrients for the cow herd except salt and water.
- If you use a rotational grazing system, graze native grass using 40-day intervals (rest 40 days, graze five days).
- Set temporary fences to establish grazing rotation system.
- Continue anaplasmosis control program.
- If fall calving, develop marketing or retained ownership plan for calves. Look for unsound cows that should be culled due to feet, leg, eye or utter problems.
- Deworm cows and bulls if needed.
- For spring calving enterprises, critically evaluate body condition in thin cows. If body condition score is less than 4, consider weaning calves early, especially from first calf heifers.

JUNE

- Begin grub treatments.
- Continue fly and tick control program.
- Continue anaplasmosis control program.
- Pregnancy check cows and bred heifers. Consider culling problem or low performance cattle.
- Begin weaning fall calves when warm-season grasses start to deteriorate in quality.
- Cut native grass before July 1. Do not mow or graze again until after frost.
- Cows and calves on improved pasture should be dewormed.

References: 1. <http://osuextra.okstate.edu/pdfs/F-3261web.pdf>

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Purina research has discovered a magnesium source that is coarse-textured for weather resistance, and is readily absorbed and utilized by cattle. Purina’s Wind and Rain® High Magnesium minerals contain higher levels of magnesium, making it easy to supplement this nutrient on lush pastures any time you’re concerned about grass tetany. Wind and Rain® mineral formulations help to insure adequate levels of available magnesium as well as a more consistent rate of consumption.

See your Purina dealer today for additional details and a personal herd mineral consultation that fits your specific beef cattle enterprise needs.

References: 1. http://www.extension.org/pages/Preventing_Grass_Tetany 2. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FILES/DS/DS13700.pdf>

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