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## Ryegrass staggers and summer grass toxin loading

Decent summer rains have blessed (or cursed) many areas across southern Australia this year, bringing up weeds that hadn't been seen for years and kicking summer grazing crops into full production along with saving and resurrecting perennial ryegrass stands. But with the new life breathed into pastures, the warm days and minimal follow up rain, we are likely to see endophytes cause some serious staggers problems around the country.

Perennial Ryegrass Toxicosis is caused from endophyte alkaloids found in perennial ryegrass, the toxins are created to protect the plant when it is stressed. Some alkaloids reduce blood flow in animals resulting in heat stress – they can be seen standing in troughs or dams, while others produce alkaloids that are converted to LSD like compounds, causing the animals to become staggy and spooked or go on misadventure.

Cattle have slightly different symptoms to sheep and younger stock will be at greatest risk and likely to show shaking, staggering and heat stress. Sheep have a great susceptibility and larger mortalities can be seen. Sheep will suffer heat stress, be physically challenged and fall over or be unable to eat or drink. What to do about it? Firstly, be aware of what classes of animals are most at risk and the highest risk paddocks to manage appropriately. Dilution is the best cure, if animals are grazing 100% ryegrass then dilute with conserved forage. Where animals are grazing risky pastures even with some dilution, a toxin binder will assist in deactivating the alkaloids.

With the way this season has turned out, there has also been dry standing feed that has been exposed to the fluctuations of rain-heat-humidity that has caused rotting of the plants. The mould grown on and inside the dry standing feeds, that can be a large array of species, has seen a number of mould toxicities in livestock. Look for black specks, rotting at the plant base or 'unwell' looking manure from animals, rough coats and a general 'off' appearance. Fortunately, the methodology of treatment to both staggers and mould are the same.

For animals that are showing signs and symptoms

1. draft off and remove from the source
2. ensure plenty of free choice, clean water and forage
3. Provide TPM Bovine Boost Toxin Inhibitor with Elitox free choice or mix with a small amount of balanced grain to ensure adequate intake.

For more information contact your local TRAC consultant.