



TOM GREEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES NEWS

November 2018

Prussic Acid Poisoning in Livestock

This morning (Tuesday November 13, 2018) we received our first general, widespread freeze event. It is the time of year my office gets a lot of phone calls asking about prussic acid poisoning in livestock grazing johnson grass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids.

Under normal conditions when the plants are actively growing and healthy they contain low levels of prussic acid (Hydrocyanic acid or cyanide). However these low levels break down over time, thus eliminating toxic accumulations. High levels of prussic acid accumulation can occur when:

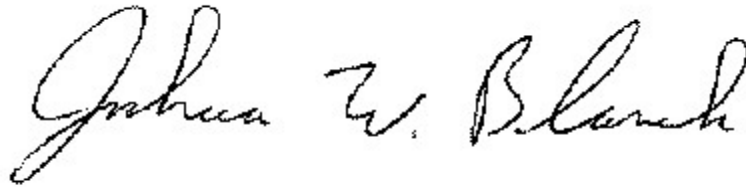
- There are poor growing conditions like drought that prevent stems and leaves from developing properly.
- Recent hay harvest or grazing causes slow and stunted growth of new plant tissue.
- Plants develop new growth after a prolonged drought or a freeze event.
- Plants are injured by herbicides, frost, hail or other events.

One problem with prussic acid is that it tends to come and go. This makes it hard to accurately sample for prussic acid due to the fact that cyanide quickly dissipates from the plant once the sample is taken and plant begins to die. Samples sent to the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) should be hand delivered or shipped overnight. However, the most common rule of thumb we use is waiting 10-14 days after a frost, or a rain event on drought stress forage, to turn livestock in or bale for hay.

If you would like more info about prussic acid poisoning symptoms or sending in samples you can contact the Tom Green County AgriLife Extension office at 325-659-6522 or click on the link below.

<https://agrifecdn.tamu.edu/foragefax/files/2013/05/Nitrates-and-Prussic-Acid-in-Forages1.pdf>

[FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



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