



THE GRASS ISN'T ALWAYS GREENER...



Do you know what to watch for when putting horses and livestock out on lush pasture this Spring?

Spring is one of our favorite times of year at Tri-State Vet. Babies are being born, the air is getting warmer, and everything is turning green! But with everything that is good, it must be kept in moderation. Before you open the barn doors to let everyone out to pasture, understand the problems that can be associated with springtime pastures.

Equine

Early spring grasses are extremely rich in sugar. This high sugar content can cause issues with equine digestion and metabolic regulation resulting in colic and laminitis.

Gas Colic

The sugars in the grass break down quickly in the gut resulting in excess gas production by bacteria in the intestine. Build up of this gas results in cramping, dilation of intestine and potential displacement or twisting of intestinal tract. Any of these processes results in a colicky horse. The best way to prevent gas colic is to slowly introduce your horse to the grass pasture by limiting the amount of grass they have access to and the amount of time they are on grass. You can start by putting them out on a small paddock of grass for an hour or two a day and slowly increase their access space and time over a two-to-four-week period. Additionally, you can provide a probiotic supplement to their feed to promote healthy gut bacteria and regular digestion.

Equine (continued)

Laminitis

Excessive sugar in the diet can be detrimental to horses with Cushing's disease (PPID) or insulin insensitivity (EMD) resulting in inflammation of the lamina in the hoof and causing the horse to founder.

Best practice to prevent a laminitic episode in your horse is to only turn them out after 11:00 AM and limit their exposure time and volume of grass. The sugars in the grass are most concentrated in the morning, so waiting until later morning or early afternoon to turn out can decrease the amount of sugar they receive from grazing. Grazing muzzles and cutting the grass in the pasture can also aid in regulating your horse's access to grass.

Blood testing can be done to determine your horse's metabolic health and determine if they are at higher risk for having a laminitic event secondary to excess dietary sugar.

Cattle and Sheep

Whereas the horses are sensitive to sugars in the grass, ruminants are prone to developing disease from changes in grass magnesium, potassium, and tryptophan levels.

Grass Tetany

Lush Spring pastures tend to be low in magnesium and high in potassium. This change in ratio can result in low magnesium in the blood of cattle and sheep, causing abnormal muscle contractions. The animals are unable to move correctly, get up, and in some cases have trouble breathing.

This condition is more common in lactating cattle newly put on pasture. Severity of disease is determined by magnesium and potassium levels in the grass. This disease is treatable but can be life threatening if clinical signs are severe and not recognized quickly.

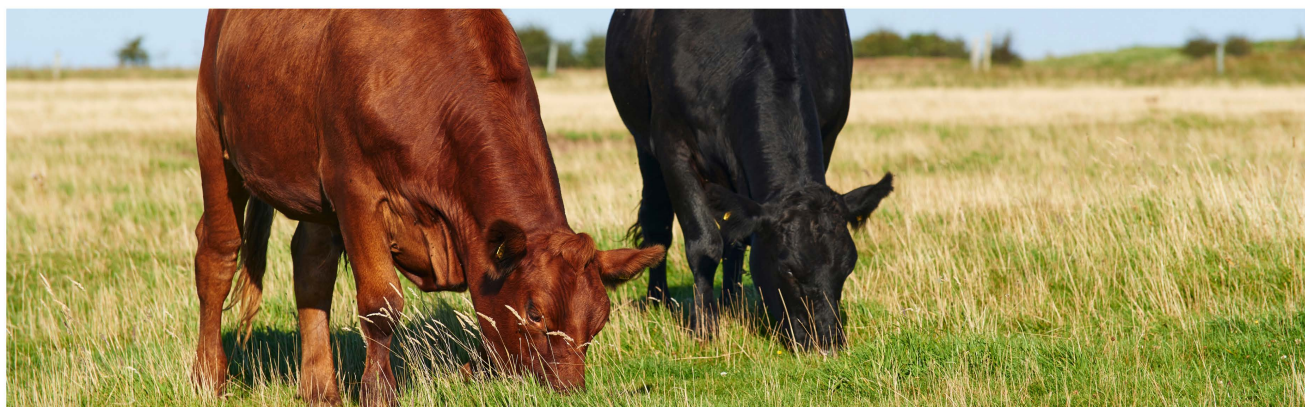
Grass tetany can be prevented by supplementing magnesium in the diet of cattle and sheep going out to lush pastures. It is also helpful to have your soil and forage tested each Spring to know magnesium and potassium levels before putting livestock out to pasture.

Cattle and Sheep (continued)

Fog Fever

This disease is formally known as Acute Bovine Pulmonary Edema and Emphysema (ABPEE). ABPEE occurs in animals who have been fed primarily inside on hay, silage, and grain all fall and winter then suddenly put out to pasture in the Spring. The lush grass is high in tryptophan, an amino acid in the grass protein. This sudden change in protein is broken down rapidly the bacteria in the rumen resulting in production of 3-methylindole (3-MI). This 3-MI substance causes severe damage to the lungs, resulting in respiratory problems and death.

The best way to prevent Fog Fever is to limit cattle exposure to only a few hours a day for the first 10-14 days of grazing. This way the tryptophan in the grass is slowly introduced to the rumen and they can adjust safely.



How can we help?

If you have any questions or concerns adjusting your horses or livestock to pasture this Spring, do not hesitate to contact us. We are happy to assess your animals' risks and develop a unique plan to address their specific needs.



(860)459-0986

tsvs.management@gmail.com

www.tristatevetservices.com
