

Colorful leaves aren't the only things falling from trees this time of year. Acorns are dropping left and right. While many people may think of acorns as harmless, or as a fall decorative item, cattle producers should remember that acorns are far from that and can even be fatal.

Acorn toxicity is most prevalent in pastures that lack ample grazing. The pastures that are short of grass and have high amounts of oak trees are considered "high risk" because cows have an increased potential for developing acorn toxicity. Due to decreased grass production, cows begin to consume large amounts of the acorns produced from the oak trees. Yearlings and older cattle are most susceptible to contracting an acorn toxicity. Affected cattle may develop a lack of appetite, diarrhea, constipation, and may become emaciated. If not treated, kidney damage may occur, resulting in chronic poor-doing cattle, or even death.

Because acorn toxicity is so serious, prevention is very important. Fencing off oak trees, or completely removing the cattle from the affected pasture is the best method of prevention. In situations where this is not possible, feeding cubes or providing a good quality hay is beneficial, as it increases protein consumption, which in turn decreases acorn consumption.

Please contact us if you have any questions, or if you would like more information regarding acorn toxicity.