

Many producers in the county are experiencing increased forage growth in their pastures thanks to the recent summer rains that have come their way. Although this is a sight for many sore eyes, relief should be accompanied by an ever increasing awareness of the maturing dallisgrass that is present in pastures. This week we will discuss why this should be a concern for some producers, and look at ways to keep dallisgrass from negatively affecting your herd.

Dallisgrass matures in late summer and early fall. When dallisgrass is overgrown and mature, a sticky, sap substance develops on the seed head of the plant (please refer to Figure 1 below). These sticky seed heads contain an ergot-like fungus which may poison cattle if consumed in large enough quantities. High-risk areas that are prone to overgrown and matured dallisgrass include low-lying areas behind tank dams and at the bottom of hills (Figure 2). Matured dallisgrass is also common in areas that have not had a significant amount of grazing pressure on them, and in pastures that have grown up significantly due to summer rains.

Because dallisgrass is so common and may cause health problems in cattle, appropriate action should take place. It is important to carefully manage high risk areas that cattle are exposed to to reduce the risk of them falling victim to dallisgrass poisoning. Proper pasture and grazing management is a great way to ensure that the cattle do not consume a poisonous amount of affected dallisgrass. In pastures that are almost completely overtaken with matured dallisgrass, mowing may be the most effective method of prevention. This can be best done by simply mowing the seed heads off of dallisgrass, as the seed heads are the source of poison, not the stem or leaves. For more information about identifying dallisgrass, or preventing dallisgrass poisoning from affecting your herd, please contact us.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Thanks,
Dr. Jesse Richardson, DVM

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