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Ergot spreads even more in Alberta **Producers urged to be aware and be careful**

Ergot was a problem in Alberta a year ago. This year, the problem has become more widespread, partly due to weather and moisture conditions during the growing season.

Barry Yaremicio, Beef and Forage Specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, reports ergot is no longer just a cereal grain problem. "Reports that we're getting out of the southeastern corner of the province is that ergot is being found in the rye and wheat grasses in the native pastures. It's a cyclical problem - it will go up and it will come down in a couple more years."

Ergot in feed can be dangerous. Yaremicio explains ruminant animals should receive no more than zero point one per cent, or one kernel per 1,000 kernels. For monogastric animals such as pigs and chickens the limit should be no more than one kernel for every 2,000 kernels of seed.

There are two compounds in ergot that create trouble, says Yaremicio. "Estrogens will either prevent animals from becoming pregnant, or cause the animals to abort. Alkaloids are the circulatory restrictors that will cause hair to fall off the ears. The worst situation is where animals lose hooves. Be careful and be aware of what you're doing. If you are going to clean your wheat or grains that are contaminated with ergot do not take the screenings home and feed them to the animals. You're just asking for trouble if that happens."

Clip No. 1:

Ergot was a problem in Alberta a year ago but, in the interests of animal welfare, owners need to be aware of possible problems with feed supplies. Barry Yaremicio, Beef and Forage Specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, provides this update on the spread of ergot:

(12... "years.")

Clip No. 2:

Yaremicio is asked what producers should be watching out for when looking at what amount of ergot is safe to feed:

(16... "seed.")

Clip No. 3:

He says ergot is no longer contained to just cereal grains:

(14... "problem.")

Clip No. 4:

Yaremicio explains ergot is a costly problem because of two compounds:

(27... "bones.")

"Be careful - be aware of what you're doing. If you are going to clean your wheat or grains that are contaminated with ergot do not take the screenings home and feed those to the animals. You're just asking for trouble, if that happens," concludes Yaremicio.

This story is brought to you by Alberta Farm Animal Care in partnership with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association.

For further information contact:

Lorna Baird, Executive Director

(403) 662-8050