
‘Slobbers’ alert issued by MU

Too much clover in pasture can bring on excessive saliva

PUBLISHED ON **MAY 11TH, 2016**



When livestock, especially horses, eat too much of the small legume it brings on excessive saliva. (Virginia via Flickr)

COLUMBIA, Mo. — Legumes make good additions to livestock pastures, up to a point. Too much can cause “slobbers.”

“So far this has been a white clover spring; that can bring problems,” says Craig Roberts, University of Missouri Extension forage specialist. When livestock, especially horses, eat too much of the small legume it brings on excessive saliva.

It’s not the clover but a fungus that grows on legumes in excessively wet summers, Roberts said. “This year some grass pastures look as though they have become clover fields.” “Some fields may look like 80 percent clover,” he says. “On a dry matter basis it may only be 30 percent.”

In the past, excessive growth in wet years brought on the condition caused by a mycotoxin from a fungus, Rhizoctonia. The fungal growth on legumes is called “black patch.” That name comes from black spots, or even dots, on legume leaves. The impact is not limited to white clover. The fungus can affect all legumes from alfalfa to soybeans.

Large animals, such as horses, seem affected the most. However, even goats get “slobbers.” The remedy is to move livestock to another pasture. If that’s not possible, feed dry grass hay to dilute the toxin.

Roberts gave the alert on the weekly MU agronomy teleconference. The phone hookup with regional MU Extension specialists gives updates on scouting reports. “I’ve not seen it this year,” Roberts said. “Just alert farmers to be on the lookout.” To use the weather terms, it is a “watch,” not a “warning.”

Local MU Extension agronomists can assist with identification, or they can help in sending plant samples to the MU Plant Diagnostic Clinic.

— Duane Dailey, University of Missouri Extension