

■ TETANY,
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salts). The most common form of Mg, magnesium oxide, is not soluble in water and therefore cannot be used for this purpose. **Most susceptible animals** Older, lactating cows with calves younger than two months of age have the greatest susceptibility to tetany; while steers, heifers, dry cows, or cows with calves older than four months of age are less susceptible. "Mature cows are more susceptible because they are less able to mobilize Mg from bones to maintain the necessary level in their system. Also, cows within two months after calving have increased milk production and require additional Ca and Mg," Harty said.

Harty explained that cattle will exhibit symptoms of grass tetany, but they may not be observed as death may occur relatively

quickly - within four to eight hours. "An affected animal will exhibit a series of progressive signs. These include grazing away from the herd, irritability, muscle twitching in the flank, wide-eyed and staring, muscular incoordination, staggering, collapse, thrashing, head thrown back, coma, and finally death," she said.

Affected animals should be handled calmly, since sudden death can occur if animals are stressed. There are treatment options for animals, but effectiveness depends on the clinical stage when administered, Harty explained. "If treatment is started one or two hours after clinical signs develop, the result is usually a quick recovery," she said. "Treatment is not effective if delayed until the coma stage."

Grass tetany can be treated with an intravenous dextrose-based commercial preparation of Mg and Ca purchased from a local veterinarian. "Remember cattle are more susceptible

to grass tetany in the spring, and certain weather conditions increase susceptibility," Harty said. Consider and implement prevention practices, monitor cattle for signs of grass tetany, and treat as soon as possible according to a protocol developed with a veterinarian."

For more information, contact Harty at 605-394-1722 or adele.harty@sdsu.edu.

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