

Guard Against Grass Tetany

Lush spring pastures can cause a serious livestock stress and even death, warns D. Richard Fowler, University of Delaware extension livestock specialist. Grass tetany, or grass staggers, is a common ailment of livestock which have been turned out hungry to graze on spring pastures.

Grass tetany is characterized by sudden, rapid attacks of nervous spasms. Cattle with the disease exhibit an unstable and shaky walk. They eventually become unable to walk and will die unless treated promptly. Death may occur without any illness having been observed, says Fowler. In mild cases, cattle indicate restlessness and may urinate frequently before more serious symptoms occur.

The stress may be brought on in early spring by the sudden change in feed for the cattle. The content of lush spring pasture is characterized by high protein and low energy. This situation disrupts normal digestion in the rumen and causes the release of high levels of ammonia in the rumen fluid. The ammonia raises the pH of the rumen and small intestine, explains Fowler. The higher pH apparently prevents the absorption of calcium and magnesium from the intestine into the blood. Low blood magnesium levels result, causing the symptoms of shakiness and instability.

Good management can prevent tetany, says Fowler. Since the stress most often results under conditions of an improper protein-energy balance,

corrective action can be taken by feeding ground grain such as corn or barley supplemented with magnesium.

Fowler recommends that two weeks before cattle are turned out on grass they should be hand-fed a mixture of at least one pound of grain and two ounces of magnesium oxide (MgO) per head every day. This practice should be continued three to four weeks after turning cattle out to pasture. Since there is some danger of magnesium toxicity if too much magnesium is fed, care should be taken to see that cattle share the grain mixture equally and that a few do not eat all of it.

Other preventive measures are magnesium pellets which are manufactured to be palatable to cattle, or a mineral block containing MgO which can be situated where cattle have access to it.

Fowler emphasizes that the farmer can take measures to prevent tetany, but if any animal does contact the disease, it can be treated properly only by a trained veterinarian. Prompt treatment is necessary, or death can result for the animal.

Golden Guernsey 4-H Club

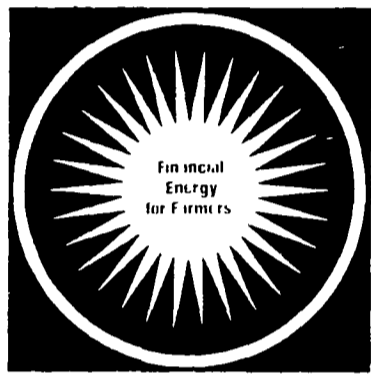
The second meeting of the Golden Guernsey club was recently held at Solanco High School.

The meeting was called to order by president, Jane McSparran. Members were asked to give reports on their projects.

Carol Balmer and Debbie Crider gave a report on the Guernsey tour which took place on March 31. Highlighting the meeting was an auction.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Fred Crider on May 6 at 7:30 p.m. A grooming demonstration will be given.

Connie Balmer
News Reporter



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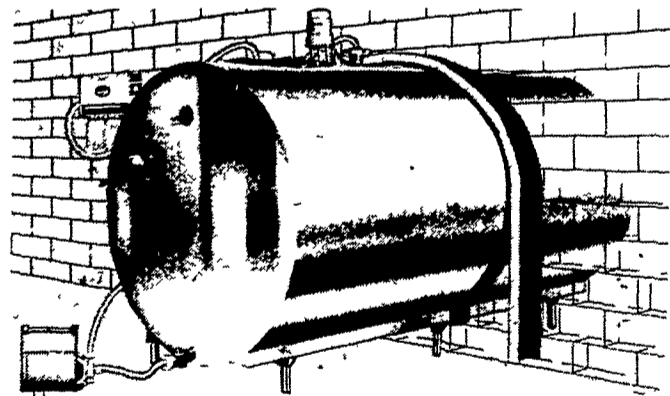
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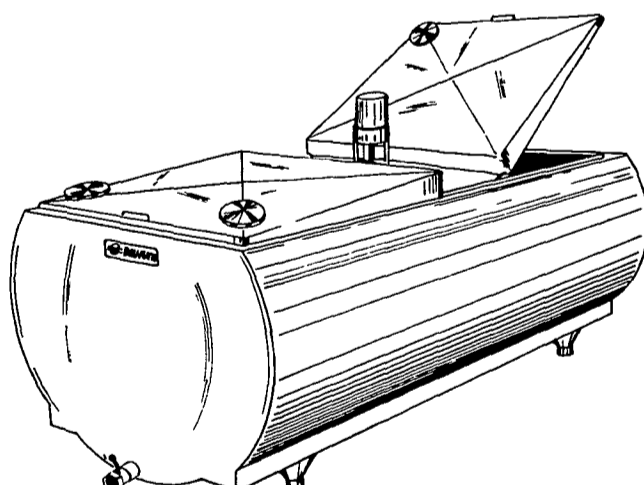
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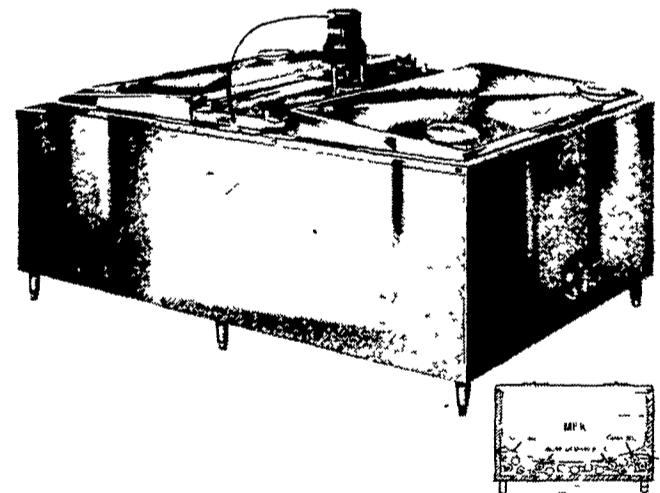
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