

MEDICINE AND MANAGEMENT

By CARL TROOP, VMD



Acorns may cause stomach and financial woes

Many stories and tales have been told about "acorn poisoning" some true and some not. Ripe acorns are relatively nonpoisonous, at least substantially less poisonous than the green or unripe acorns or green oak leaves. Generally, even though all animals of a herd

are on a common pasture only certain cows or a small part of the herd become ill. Younger animals especially seem to favor the fallen acorns (under certain conditions it may be the only feed), while most of the herd will pay little attention to them. Acorn poisoning

usually occurs only in those years in which there is a rich crop of acorns, and then often only after storms with high winds or other violent weather when a large amount of acorns would fall at one time. A bad storm and discovery of an animal which apparently died

suddenly may make one think of lightning, but acorn poisoning is another possibility. In ordinary years pastures with stands of oak trees do not present a problem.

Oak leaf or acorn poisoning has been described in Southeast Europe, England, Holland, France, Scandinavia, and the United States. Some of the indications for considering acorn poisoning are as follows.

1. Of most importance, of course, is the presence of oaks in the pasture with green leaves or acorns available to the animals.
2. Length of illness can vary from a few days to a month or more.
3. Temperature is usually normal.
4. Diarrhea and loss of body condition.
5. Lack of appetite.
6. The animal may stand with a lowered head, arched back, tight abdominal muscles as if experiencing some colicky pain.
7. Skin is dry, haircoat rough, eyes sunken.
8. Crusty secretions of the

eyes and nose with a dry muzzle.

9. In most advanced cases there is no response to treatment.

It must be remembered, however, that not all cases need be that severe. Ingestion of only a few green acorns may produce only a slight loss of appetite, or even more subtle, just a decrease in milk production. Acorns have been blamed

for prematurely drying cows up.

If any of these problems sound familiar, occasional cows off feed or sudden drop in milk for no apparent reason, check the pastures for noxious weeds as well as acorns. This seems to have been a reasonably good year for acorns, and if they and the cows can be kept apart, can be a good year for the cows, too.

New farm bill considered harmful

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "The new Farm Bill is a political compromise that may do more long-term harm than good to American agriculture," Allan Grant said here last week.

Grant, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), referred to the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977, signed into law Sept. 29 by President Carter in a ceremony attended by Grant.

While supporting many of the basic concepts of the new law, some of which were the results of Farm Bureau recommendations, Grant said that he is concerned that the higher price support loans will interfere with efforts to expand foreign markets for American farm commodities.

"The new law may contain mechanisms that would put agriculture on a greased slide back to the kind of government programs that paid farmers not to produce," Grant said.

consumers want the kind of farm program in which the government becomes a major buyer, accumulating huge surpluses of grain to hang over and depress market prices, Grant said.

He added that farmers don't like such programs because they cause lower, politically controlled prices. Consumers dislike them because they resent government handouts to farmers.

The AFBF president said that the new law's disaster payment provisions are "significantly" improved over those of the previous law in that they are more flexible and realistic.

He also lauded the increased authorization for agricultural research funds to \$890 million in fiscal 1978 and to \$1.42 billion by 1982 as being "urgently needed" by farmers and future generations of consumers.

But Grant doesn't like many provisions of the food stamp part of the 1977 Act.

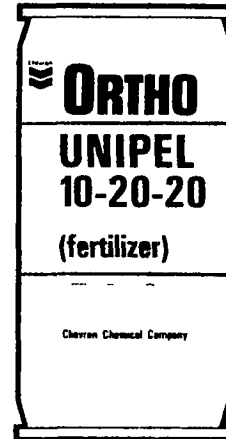
Especially irritating to the Neither farmers nor AFBF president is the

elimination of the purchase requirement for food stamp recipients who, under the 1977 Act, will be handed free food stamps without putting up any money of their own.

"We support the food stamp concept as a means of assisting those truly in need," Grant said. "But, we think that only domestic food should be available for purchase with food stamps, and the emphasis should be on proper nutrition."

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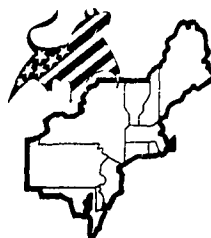
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