

Nitrate circular describes hazards to humans, livestock

EBENSBURG — Nitrate provides plants with essential nitrogen, but excess nitrate can convert to toxic substances in the digestive systems of human infants and some livestock.

The effects of nitrate on families and livestock is the topic of a new publication by The Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service. Special Cir-

cular 308 explains how excess nitrate can leach into groundwater supplies and contaminate wells.

Human babies are extremely susceptible to acute nitrate poisoning. Certain bacteria, present in their digestive systems at birth, change the nitrate into toxic nitrite. The nitrite reacts with hemoglobin to form methemoglobin, which does not

carry oxygen. As the level of oxygen throughout the body decreases, the baby is suffocated, a condition known as methemoglobinemia.

Around the age of three months, the baby has an increased amount of hydrochloric acid in the stomach which kills most of the bacteria. At six months of age, the digestive system is fully developed, and none of the nitrate-converting bacteria remain. In older children and adults, nitrate is absorbed and excreted; therefore,

methemoglobinemia is no longer a concern.

Ruminant animals such as sheep and cattle and infant monogastrics such as chickens and pigs also have nitrate-converting bacteria in their digestive systems. All are affected by nitrate poisoning in the same way. Although horses are monogastrics, they have a cecum similar to the rumen which houses nitrate-converting bacteria and puts horses at risk of nitrate-poisoning, too.

Livestock are exposed to nitrate in feed and water. To protect

livestock, both feed and water should be tested for nitrates. If nitrate poisoning is diagnosed early, both human infants and animals can be treated and most will recover completely.

The circular also explains how much nitrate is dangerous. Information is given on testing water for nitrate contamination, purifying and protecting the water supply and applying nitrogen properly.

Special Circular 308 is available from your county Extension office.

Meat imports not expected to trigger restrictions

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of Agriculture John Block today said the third quarterly estimate of U.S. meat imports for 1985 is below the level that would require quotas on imports under the Meat Import Act of 1979.

Block said that, based on USDA estimates of available supplies, imports of beef and certain other meats should be no more than 1,180 million pounds — about 139 million pounds below the 1985 trigger level of 1,319 million pounds.

The Meat Import Act requires the President to restrict imports of certain meats, primarily beef and veal, if the USDA estimate equals or exceeds the trigger level.

"Based on today's estimate, there is no need to impose import restrictions during the quarter beginning July 1," Block said. "Our analysis of conditions in this country and abroad affecting meat imports strongly suggests there will be no need for import restrictions for the remainder of the year."

Wolf teeth can cause problems in horses

EBENSBURG — Not all horses have wolf teeth, and not all those that do have them are bothered by them. Yet wolf teeth can cause irritation and pain in a horse's mouth and may require veterinary attention.

Wolf teeth are a remnant from the horse's evolutionary past, but no longer serve any useful purpose, says Dr. Larry Hutchinson, professor of veterinary science extension at The Pennsylvania State University. As a result, removal of wolf teeth usually cures any problems they may cause.

"Horses have incisors at the front of their mouth, then a gap where no teeth exist, and finally a set of cheek teeth at the back of their mouth to grind their feed," Hutchinson says. "The wolf teeth, when they occur, grow just in front of the first cheek teeth."

According to Hutchinson, wolf teeth may sometimes be as large as the horse's cheek teeth. Most often, however, they are small. The small wolf teeth may cause problems, especially if there is a gap between them and the cheek teeth.

"When there is separation between the cheek teeth and wolf teeth, the horse may show resentment toward the bit, possibly because the bit puts pressure on the wolf teeth and pinches or irritates the gum between the wolf and cheek teeth," Hutchinson says.

Signs of wolf teeth problems include head throwing when bridled, abnormal head carriage, bit chomping and production of excessive amounts of saliva when bridled. Sometimes horse owners misinterpret these signs and assume the horse has back problems. In either case, a veterinarian can help.

"Unless they're very large, wolf teeth are generally easy to remove," Hutchinson says. "If it's done right, many horses don't even need an anesthetic, and there is very little bleeding afterwards. The wounds heal themselves, and the horse needs 10 days with rest or without a bit but otherwise can be fed and handled as usual."

Pulling the teeth is best left to a veterinarian because a large artery runs through the mouth very

near the teeth. This artery could be damaged if the wrong procedure is used to remove the wolf teeth. Also, if the wolf teeth are broken off rather than completely removed, they will continue to irritate the horse and cause problems.

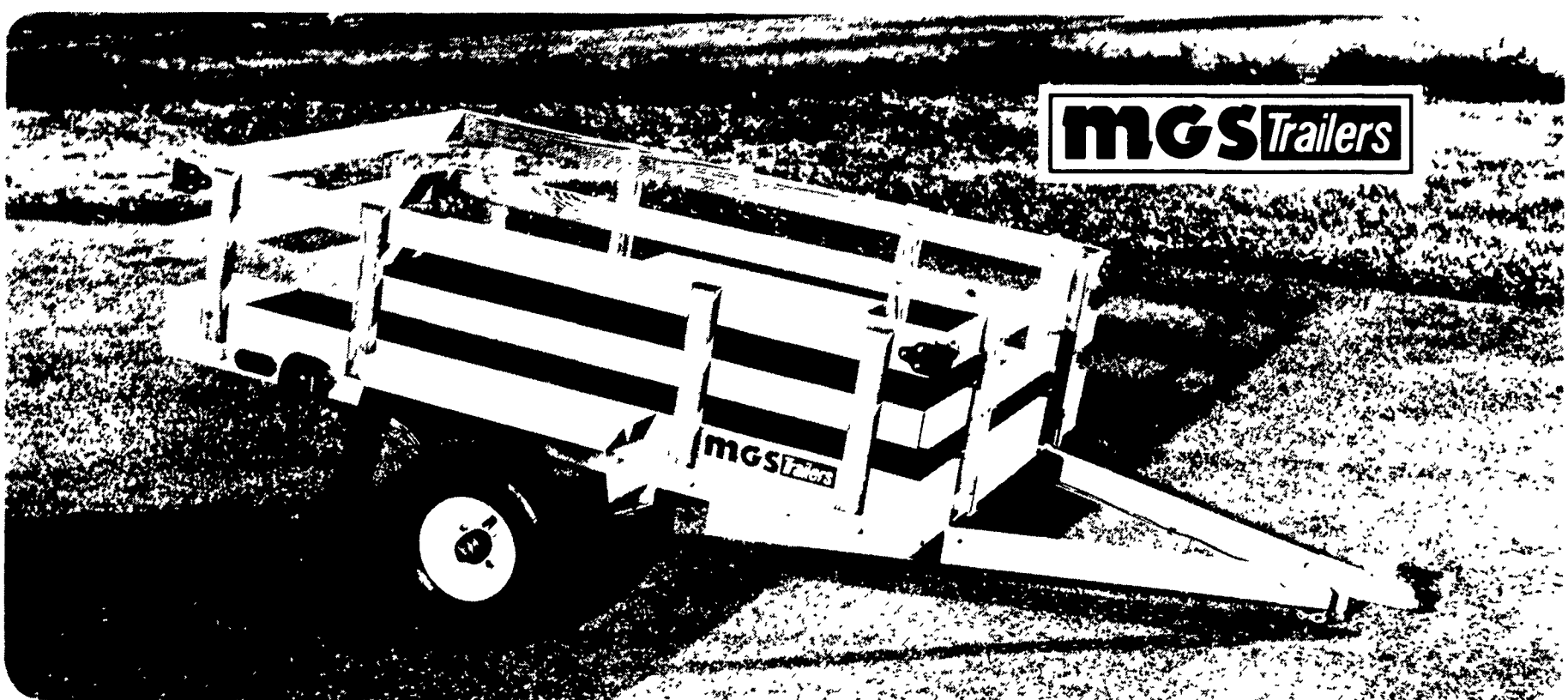
Many veterinarians will look for wolf teeth during routine dental examinations of horses. At that time they also look for other dental problems such as teeth that are wearing unevenly.

Any time horse owners notice a horse losing weight, dropping food from the mouth while chewing, having swellings along the nose or under the jaw, or producing a nasal discharge, the horse could have dental disease. Similarly, resentment of the bit when the horse is ridden may indicate oral pain. For all of these situations, seek professional help.

Imports of meat subject to the law

Month	Imports of meat subject to the law			1985
	1982	1983	1984	
	—Million Pounds—			
January	55.5	92.2	87.0	59.3
February	67.5	124.3	109.2	87.0
March	127.9	127.0	84.9	87.0
April	119.2	106.5	82.3	94.6
May	86.0	92.8	89.0	122.7
June	160.6	143.2	64.9	
July	99.2	113.1	107.0	
August	133.8	124.1	100.4	
September	237.4	110.3	103.2	
October	126.6	77.8	132.7	
November	33.9	74.6	87.4	
December	71.7	54.1	93.4	
Total	1,319.6	1,240.1	1,141.4	

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