

## Moldy Feeds Can Be Very Costly

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**LANCASTER** (Lancaster Co.) — Moldy feeds could be a problem for many farmers this year, primarily because of situations that occurred around the time of harvest.

Corn dried down very rapidly in the field and some of it was too dry when harvested to pack well in the silo.

When corn has over 15 percent moisture and is piled or stored for more than about six hours without being aerated, dried, acid-treated or ensiled, heating, mold development and mycotoxin formation occurs.

This process speeds up under warm conditions such as occurred this fall.

Some ear corn was put on piles this fall, waiting to be chopped and ensiled at a later date. Some of this corn was already moldy by the time it was chopped and bagged.

Ensiling and heating moldy corn, or adding preservatives to moldy corn will not destroy molds or mycotoxins that are already present.

Ammoniation might help reduce aflatoxins in some situations, but it is not practical for most farm situations.

About all that can be done is prevent the problem from becoming worse.

One way is to feed ensiled feeds fast enough and frequently enough to stay ahead of spoilage — while also limiting intake of moldy feeds.

Another way is to dry and aerate grains, remove fines to improve air circulation, or acid-treat grains to retard further spoilage.

Feeding moldy feeds can be very costly! It affects animals in various ways, depending upon the kinds and amounts of molds and mycotoxins consumed.

Young, unhealthy and stressed animals are more susceptible. Pigs,

horses and poultry are more sensitive than ruminants.

Symptoms of mold and mycotoxin-related problems are similar to those of many other problems. This makes accurate diagnosis more difficult.

Symptoms in dairy cattle include: reduced dry matter intakes, lower milk production, poorer conception, enlarged vulvas, irregular heats, diarrhea, more ketosis and displaced abomasums (DA), and in severe cases, death.

The affect of mycotoxins can be cumulative.

As mycotoxins inflict continued injury to the kidneys, animals display less and less resistance to diseases and infections.

Symptoms for other animals can be similar.

If you have moldy feeds and are experiencing some of the problems mentioned above, and you have ruled out other causes of these problems, be suspicious of moldy feeds. These feeds could include silages, high moisture grains and hay, plus purchased grains, concentrates and byproduct feeds.

Consult your veterinarian and nutritionist for advice.

Consider analyzing suspect feeds for mycotoxins, preferably before you start feeding them. Use good sampling techniques for the reasons mentioned below.

When attempting to predict mold toxicity of feeds, appearances can be deceptive. Feeds that do not appear to be moldy might be toxic. Other feeds that are moldy might be safe to feed.

Moldy clumps of feed might not contain any mycotoxins. Non-moldy feed, a foot or two away from moldy clumps, could be loaded with toxins.

Mycotoxins can also exist in pockets of concentration scattered throughout the feed supply. Thus it is very important to obtain representative samples for analysis.

Sample three to five different

loads or feedings, and obtain eight to 12 samples from each.

Mix all of these subsamples together and submit about 2 pounds for analysis. Also hold another 2 pounds in reserve for confirmatory analyses, should it become necessary at a later date.

Sample bagged silage by boring through the plastic in several locations, and patching the holes securely when done.

Handle samples according to laboratory recommendations.

One of the main toxins of concern for dairy is a fusarium-toxin known as DON or vomitoxin. Zearalenone and aflatoxin may be a problem too.

If you have horses or mules check for fumonisin or B1 toxin; they are very sensitive to it. Pigs are sensitive to all of these.

If you have moldy feeds there are several things that can be done.

First of all, consult with your veterinarian and nutritionist. Analyze suspect feeds. Reduce feeding rates.

Remove ensiled feeds at a rate rapid enough to keep ahead of spoilage, even if it means feeding two or three herds from one silo. Keep ensiled feeds fresh by feeding it more often, by frequently removing old feed from bunks and mangers, and by maintaining a well-sheared face on horizontal silos.

Do not give moldy feeds to young animals, pregnant animals, and cows in early lactation. Also remember that horses, pigs and chickens are more sensitive to molds than ruminant animals.

Moldy feeds have less energy than indicated on forage test reports. Digestibility and intakes also are reduced.

To compensate for this, discount the energy values on forage test reports by 5 percent to 8 percent and increase the energy density of the ration.

Include bentonite or aluminosilicate in the ration to help reduce

the effects of mycotoxins.

Where practical, ammoniation can be used in an attempt to destroy some of the aflatoxins.

In severe cases, discard moldy feeds, because good herd performance is worth much more than the value of moldy feeds.



Mifflin County's new Farm Bureau president Mark Ellinger of Lewistown, left, stands with treasurer and membership processor Pauline Glick of Belleville and secretary Janice White. Both were re-elected.

## Farm Bureau Field Services Director Emphasizes Education

**GAIL STROCK**

Mifflin Co. Correspondent  
**LEWISTOWN** (Mifflin Co.)—"You don't have to grow up on a farm to understand and appreciate agriculture," said Alison Cowen, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's director of field services.

Cowen spoke at the Mifflin County Farm Bureau annual meeting the end of September.

Raised in Queens, New York City, Cowen told her city-to-country story and finished by emphasizing education.

"Give people the opportunity to learn about your occupation," she

said, giving timely advice just before Farm/City Week.

Cowen spoke to the group as part of their annual business meeting. In the election of directors, Glen Martin of Bratton Township, Mike Goss of Oliver Township, and Dave Stuck of Union Township directors were re-elected to serve three-year terms.

State Director Wayne Freeman honored Membership Chairman Ken Loht of McClure with a certificate for signing 26 new members in 1995. Elrose Glick of Belleville received recognition for obtaining 11 new members. Recognition was given to Gloria Goss of McVeytown for serving as ag in the classroom coordinator, Gail Strock for serving as county information director, and Ken Loht for obtaining goal as membership chairman. Elrose Glick, Ken Loht, Mark Ellinger, and Gail Strock also received star awards from the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) office in Camp Hill.

Governmental Relations Director Mark Ellinger reported on national and state legislative activity. Dave Stuck conducted the policy development session.

At the board of director's reorganizational meeting, Mark Ellinger of Lewistown was elected president, replacing Stan Dunk of Vira who had served as president for three years. Dave Stuck of Belleville was re-elected as vice president while Janice White of Reedsville will continue as secretary for the organization. Pauline Glick of Belleville will continue as treasurer and membership processor.

Board members Elrose and Pauline Glick and Mark Ellinger will serve as voting delegates to the PFB convention in Hershey on Nov. 13-15.

## Harvest Better Than Expected

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Richard Plotts, county agent in Clinton County, said some corn yields are better than farmers thought they would be. Beans seem to be totally damaged because pods were developing at the hottest, driest part of the summer.

Mark Madden, agronomy agent, Susquehanna/Bradford, said yields are "not too shabby." He said isolated farms and communities are not as good. But crops seem to be resilient. "We are not into picking corn with field checks at 140 bu.," Madden said. "That is good for our area. The cribs and barns seem to be full around here."

One problem that has become apparent on many farms involves moldy feeds. Corn dried down very rapidly in the field, and some farmers found the corn was already too dry

when they harvested it, and the silage did not pack well in the silo. You will want to read the column "Moldy Feeds Can Be Very Costly" by Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County dairy agent, in this issue.

The cover photographs were both taken late Monday afternoon at the corner of Pioneer and Book Roads, northwest of Lampeter in Lancaster County. The combine is run by Doug Rohrer on Linn Moedinger's farm along Pioneer Road. The Amish corn picking picture was taken from Book Road with the Samuel and David King farm in the background. In the photo on this page, Rohrer fills the truck with shelled corn in front of Moedinger's barn. Photos by Everett Newswanger, managing editor.

