A cow standing in a field

Description automatically generatedA close up of a logo

Description automatically generated **July**  NEWSLETTER **2020**

***‘Rain Rain Go Away Come Again Another Day’***

It is really raining out there today as I sit to write! We recently drove out to the mountains and could not believe the water levels, muddy rivers and standing water nearly everywhere you look! It is wet as we head into summer! We are hoping for a little sunshine and maybe a little more stable weather as haying season is upon us—realistically though, you might be looking at some ways to harvest higher moisture hay such as haylage or wrapping bales in order to preserve quality. Dry hay may certainly be a challenge. How do you like to spend rainy days? With COVID-19 it might look a little different? I have often felt rain brings an opportunity to rest or at least gear down for a moment and maybe add an extra cup of coffee to the morning routine. While you’re sipping I should add a correction to the June newsletter: when I listed trace minerals I mistakenly wrote magnesium in my list when it should have read manganese—I appreciate the astute nutritionist from Jones Creek Livestock Consulting that texted me to point out my error:)

This month we thought we’d point out a few toxic plants to watch for. With abundant grass readily available, cattle typically avoid grazing these plants, however it is key to note that accidental grazing is more common in wet years when root systems are shallow and easily pulled from the ground. Water hemlock for example is not toxic when foliage alone is consumed but if the root pulls up and is consumed can be instantly deadly.

There are some great conferences on the horizon of which we will highlight two below—both virtual this year lending to participating from the comfort of home. Lastly an exciting announcement—online shopping! Due to COVID-19 and an effort to bring safer options to clients we have launched an online shopping site. To start we have mainly pet food and small animal merchandise though some equine supplements and products are available with more being added daily! Check out the link at [www.stettlervetclinic.com](http://www.stettlervetclinic.com) or go directly to <https://stettlervetclinic.clientvantage.ca>

**Steer Clear of Toxic Plants on Pasture**

With the abundant moisture this spring and bulk of our service area looking lush and green it is prudent to take a moment and highlight some potential toxic plants. Grazing cattle can at times become exposed to toxic plant species on pasture and already a couple of cases have cropped up warranting a quick discussion on some of these problem plants.

A group of cattle grazing on a lush green field

Description automatically generatedThere are many toxic plants in western Canada. Ideally, knowing which plants pose problems and where they are located allows for best control through spraying or other grazing management practices. Cattle do not tend to eat these plants when grass is abundant, though still can, particularly when mineral or salt is not offered. When cutting a field for hay or silage, caution must be used as these plants can become incorporated into harvested feed and still pose risk when later fed.

Some plants accumulate toxins such as nitrates, cyanide, or selenium, effects ranging from death to more chronic ill-thrift or abortion. Other plants contain oxalates which can tie up calcium in the body causing gut problems or kidney issues with cattle displaying signs similar to milk fever. Nearly 60 types of plants as well as water sources can accumulate toxic levels of nitrates! Interestingly, cattle can tolerate nearly 10 times the amount of nitrogen in plants versus water so water testing can become important when nearby runoff from farmyards or crop land feed into the water source. Runoff from corral areas is prevalent this year

Water hemlock tends to grow in wet areas with one root able to kill a cow—this risk increases when the ground is wet whereby the cow can pull the whole plant up and eat the deadly root. Wild parsnip can look like water hemlock but mainly gives grazing animals a sore mouth. Death camas has a small bulb root like an onion and has been noted this year in pastures around Big Valley and Delburne and can be potentially fatal also causing muscle weakness, tremors, staggering, or convulsions. Larkspur and Monkshood have deadly toxins affecting the heart but tend to be found more in mountainous areas. Horsetail, which is very abundant this year contains thiaminase enzymes that break down B-vitamins and can lead to thiamine deficiency. Bracken fern also contain thiaminases and can further cause an aplastic anemia in cattle. Lupines, also known as blue bonnet, eaten during early pregnancy can cause deformities in calves including crooked legs, fused joints, cleft palate, and more.

Milkvetch and locoweed can accumulate selenium and lead to chronic selenium toxicity which can manifest as hair loss, neurologic problems, weight loss, and even death. Other plants can cause liver damage which in turn cause photosensitization whereby affected cattle, sheep, or horses sunburn easily and can lose large areas of skin (particularly white areas). Tansy ragwort, kochia, blue green algae, and many more plants can cause liver damage. Others also include leafy spurge, absinthe wormwood, and seaside arrowgrass.

Fescue grass can easily develop ergot in seeds produced and if ergot consumption is significant can lead to abortions on pasture.

If you find a dead animal do not just assume it is a poisoning but first seek advice from your veterinarian. Infectious causes of death on pasture such as from blackleg are also surfacing this year with the increased moisture. Lead exposure (old batteries in junk piles or retired equipment), and lightning strikes are also on the list this year. We have not noted any water toxicities, but baseline water testing should look at minimum for nitrates, sulphates, and total dissolved solids. Keep watch for blue-green algae starting to bloom in some standing water, though cooler weather has kept some algae at bay.

Where can you find information about toxic plants? One client told us about an app called i-naturalist which can help identify some toxic plants. If you are suspicious of plants in your pasture, we can send specimens away to the toxicology department at the Western Vet College in Saskatoon. When sending suspicious plants in for identification it is important to send the root, stem, leaves, and if possible, the flower because the flower is often what distinguishes the plant from others that may look similar. Forage specialists are an additional resource as well. A helpful website with pictures and descriptions put together by Colorado State University can be found at <https://csuvth.colostate.edu/poisonous_plants/>; once there click on the search tool and then click the “complete list” link to scroll through.

**Online Ordering!**

Please feel free to check out our new online shopping site. Andrea has spent many hours getting the website together, tested, and launched and we are excited to offer this option! Canine, Feline, Equine, and Exotic products with more products and categories to come! Free pick up in clinic. Register today!

**Calling our SVC Ladies! She Grows Beef Virtual Conference**

Many of you have met our Merck Animal Health representative Amanda Elzinga-Pugh but for those of you who don’t know, SHE Grows Beef™ is an initiative that herself and a colleague started 2 years ago with events geared towards providing training for female beef producers. They have hosted 4 conferences and several hands-on workshops all well received. This year with COVID restrictions put in place they have worked towards putting together a virtual conference. This event will be held with a max of 2 sessions per day to allow producers to pick and choose what suits their schedules and interests. Some features this year will include Amanda Radke as the keynote speaker, and Dr. Kip Lukasiewicz on facility design. We will also have sessions on clostridial disease, BRD management, how to read your feed analysis, along with others. We are contacting many of you directly but please let us know if this is something you would be interested in and we can forward a link for registration!

**A picture containing food

Description automatically generatedSave the Date: Canadian Beef Industry Conference Free to Industry August 11-13, 2020**

This year thanks to major sponsor McDonalds, the Canadian Beef Industry Conference has gone virtual and will be free to all producers! This free online tool will allow participants to connect, learn, and support one another. Key speakers representing the beef industry in Canada and globally will have much to present given these extraordinary times. Catch well known ‘Dr. Food’ (Professor David Hughes), South Dakota rancher Amanda Radke, and many more for an energetic take on the developments in the global food industry, North American beef outlook and many more sessions and panels yet to be announced. Registration opens July 10th and you learn more or register at <https://canadianbeefindustryconference.com/wordpress/>

**Around the Clinic…**

With summer months we have many staff members rotating through some well-deserved holiday time and hope that all staff enjoy some recharge! Dr. Jackie has tapered down to a three-day workweek for the remaining summer and will be available Monday-Wednesday weekly in clinic. We bid farewell to Dr. Mirjam Stigter and wish her the best as she pursues a move with her husband to support his expanding business. We say goodbye to Ellen Althoff who spent her RVT Practicum with us and wish her the best as she plans a move to Rocky Mountain House. Ms. Terese McNabb joins us from Red Deer College for some volunteer hours; she is currently in a pre-vet program and is excited to spend some days in practice gaining experience and perspective. We also give a warm welcome to newly hired RVT Nicole Hewitt as she joins the SVC team! Nicole is moving closer to home after spending time working in a high paced emergency clinic in Lethbridge, Alberta and we look forward to her extensive experience adding much to our clinic! Stay safe and healthy everyone!

**Calling Long Distance? Use our toll-free number 1-888-GET VETS (1-888-438-8387)**

**Barb Munholland, DVM, Jackie Dobinson, DVM**

**Associates Cheryl Malin, DVM, Tara Snow, & Alicia Nauenberg, DVM**

**Helene Neale, RVT, Melissa Whelpton, RVT, Athena Peters, RVT, Nicole Hewitt, RVT**

**Andrea Muhlbach, Joanne Halseth, Terra Heier, VPM, Brittany Strandquist, Vanessa Kuziw, VMA**

***Check us out online at*** [*www.stettlervetclinic.com*](http://www.stettlervetclinic.com) ***and on Facebook***