



Nitrate Poisoning

Every year we see the preventable death of animals due to nitrate poisoning. However, with careful planning, you can manage high-risk feeds during this period to prevent nitrate poisoning.

Risk factors include:

- Feeding certain feeds such as new grass, brassicas, sorghum, annual ryegrass and oats.
- Periods of warm, wet, overcast conditions, especially after a dry spell.

Signs include:

- Lethargy,
- Rapid and open-mouth breathing
- Going down and becoming bloated
- In worst cases, death.



- ✓ **DO check nitrate levels of high-risk feed before starting to feed it out.**
Nitrate testing kits are available from your nearest clinic or you can bring a sample into us for testing.

- ✓ **DO feed alternative feeds such as hay, maize or silage or an old perennial ryegrass sward in the morning**

- ✓ **DO wait until early afternoon to feed high risk feed**

Most importantly, keep a close eye on stock after feeding high-risk feeds for signs of nitrate poisoning – these are usually apparent within 3 – 4 hours of feeding.

- ✗ **DO NOT feed high-risk feeds first thing in the morning**
Nitrate levels increase overnight so are highest in the morning
Sunlight helps to reduce nitrate levels during the day

- ✗ **DO NOT feed high-risk feeds on an empty stomach**
Concentrated amounts that are quickly eaten are more likely to cause poisoning

- ✗ **DO NOT feed high-risk feed for a long period no more than 1.5 to 2 hours!**

If you see any of these signs, call your vet **immediately**. If treated early, an antidote can be administered to save animals' lives. If left untreated, cows can die very quickly.

Contact your Anexa Vet for further information about nitrate poisoning.