

## Prussic Acid Poisoning in Sudan-sorghums

Beef producers should be aware that prussic acid poisoning is a threat to their animals each fall. Sudan grass, sorghums and their hybrids contain cyanogenetic glycosides that are converted to prussic acid during the digestion process.

The cyanogenetic glycosides generally do not cause a problem until the something causes the plant to increase the concentration. The wilting of these plants caused by a light frost results in an increase in these compounds great enough to be toxic to animals.

The key to preventing poisoning is waiting until the level of these toxic compounds has decreased. The general recommendation is wait 10 to 14 days after a light frost before allowing animals to eat the feed. If another light frost occurs during this waiting period, restart counting because there must be 10 to 14 days after the last frost before the forage can safely be utilized.

Due to frequent light frosts in the fall, most producers usually keep animals away from the forage immediately following the first light frost until 10 to 14 days after a frost that completely kills the plants. Trying to determine if there is sufficient frost to cause damage and then waiting is just too risky for most producers.

Another option for using frost damage Sudan grass, sorghums or their crosses is to harvest as hay. The poisonous compounds will dissipate in the hay if the start of feeding is at least 14 days following harvest.

Prussic acid or cyanide poisoning is a potential threat to beef cattle in the fall. Beef producers can protect their animals by preventing access to poison containing plants. For additional information, contact the local Extension office.