

## NITRATE TOXICITY COULD BE A PROBLEM AFTER DROUGHT ENDING RAIN

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The drought conditions and elevated temperatures can cause nitrate concentration in summer annuals as well as corn. Cattle producers should be cautioned about cutting or grazing drought-stressed forages. Since it has rained, and some forage growth has occurred, some cattle producers are considering harvesting the forage or turn cattle on the field to “graze” it.

Harvesting or grazing the forage can be a dangerous situation. As the plant starts to recover, grow and turn green, the nitrate uptake is increased. Enzymes are not present in great enough quantities in the plant to convert the nitrate to plant proteins. Therefore, the plant nitrate concentrations become even greater in the first few days after the rain.

Producers should be cautious in cutting or grazing shortly after a drought-ending rain. Nitrate concentrations can be very high at this time. About 7-10 days following the rain, plant metabolism returns to normal and nitrate accumulations begin to decrease.

Emphasize to your producers to test the forage before harvesting for hay or grazing. Do not harvest and store a large amount of potentially toxic forage.

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