



Ergot Fact Sheet

Major crops affected: Small grains, fescue, and other grasses

Associated mold: *Claviceps*

Conditions favoring production: Wet, cool, and cloudy during flowering.

Symptoms: The range of ergot contamination that can cause poisoning symptoms in cattle is between 0.1 and 0.3 per cent (Ergot, 2012). Acute poisoning, which results from eating a large amount of ergot at one time, causes muscular trembling, lack of coordination, convulsions, and painful contraction of the muscles. In fatal cases the animal becomes delirious. The gangrenous type of poisoning, which follows continued feeding on smaller amounts of ergot, causes the animal to become dull and depressed and to develop gangrene of the tail, feet, ears, or teats. Gangrene may vary from rather simple sores around the coronary band or top of the hoof, in the space between the claws, or on the teats, to a loosening of the hoof or the sloughing of a larger part of a limb or of the tail, ears, or teats. (Ergot, 2013)

FDA Levels: No action, advisory, or guidance levels have been established. Wheat or durum is graded as "ergoty" when it contains more than 0.05 percent by weight of ergot sclerotia; barley, oat, and triticale when they contain more than 0.1 percent by weight, and rye when it contains more than 0.3 percent. (University of Nebraska)



Ergot can be easily identified by the large, violet to black colored grains that appear near grain maturity.

Sources

- "Ergot Rears Its Ugly Head on the Prairies." *Western College of Veterinary Medicine*. University of Saskatchewan, 11 May 2012. Web. 23 Sept. 2013.
- "Ergot (*Claviceps Purpurea* (Fr.) Tul.)." *University of Illinois Vet Medicine Library*. University of Illinois, n.d. Web. 23 Sept. 2013.
- University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension. *Ergot of Small Grain Cereals and Grasses and Its Health Effects on Humans and Livestock*. By Stephen N. Wegulo and Michael P. Carlson. N.p.: Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, n.d. EC1880. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/live/ec1880/build/ec1880.pdf>>.