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Reducing Grain Poisoning Risk When Introducing Stock onto Stubbles

With large yielding crops this year, a greater than normal amount of grain may not make it into the header, due to lodging, high winds and hail. Some varieties also appear to be more susceptible to dropping heads on the ground. Anecdotally, this season there may be up to 1mt per hectare of grain left post harvest, which can be beneficial for supporting growth in lambs if managed correctly.

While the grain left behind is a valuable feed source, providing the majority of the nutritional value found in stubbles, there is also an increased risk of grain poisoning.

The Importance of Time to Adapt

The rumen of sheep and cattle requires a minimum of 10 days to adapt to a high starch (grain) diet. Molafos can be used to reduce the risk of overconsumption of grain while the adaptation process takes place.

When stock are not given sufficient time for the rumen to adapt to a high grain diet, acidosis (grain poisoning) can occur. This may be present most notably in stock deaths, however clinical and sub clinical grain poisoning can permanently reduce stock performance and profitability.

Lambs that have been transported long distances, or have come from particularly poor pastures are at highest risk of grain poisoning.

How Supplemental Feeding Can Assist

Providing hay as a supplementary feed source increases the fibre intake which has multiple benefits. The fibre slows the passage of digesta through the rumen, which reduces the amount of grain that can be eaten, preventing a spike in acid production. Fibre also encourages cud chewing (mastication), producing sodium bicarb containing saliva, which helps to buffer the rumen.

Molafos has a sweet smell and taste and can be top dressed on the hay, to further encourage stock to fill up on the hay first. The highest quality hay available is preferable, to encourage the stock to consume.

Providing Molafos on hay prior to entering the fresh stubble paddock conditions the stock to consumption, so when they are introduced to the grain heavy stubble, stock may recognise the top dressed hay as a preferable feed source.

If a small amount of grain can be provided to stock prior to entry to the fresh stubble, this can also help precondition the rumen to an increased grain diet. Mixing Molafos with the grain can help to bind the screenings and reduce dust in the feed. Molafos also contains sodium and magnesium, which can be deficient in stubble diets.

For further information, please contact your local Molafos distributor.