

**HILL FARM RESEARCH STATION  
OCTOBER 14, 2004  
FIELD DAY SUMMARY REPORT**

**COMMODITY:** Dairy / Beef

**TITLE:** Poisonous Plants And Weeds

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**TAKE HOME MESSAGE:**

Forages may accumulate toxic levels of nitrates. Excess nitrates in the diet of cattle can produce toxic effects. Nitrate ( $\text{KNO}_3$ ) > 1 % in forages is potentially lethal. Abortions may also occur. Lower levels of nitrate (0.2 %- 0.3 %) in the diet may impact reproduction. Millet, sorghum-sudan hybrids, ryegrass and oats, bermuda and bahia and weeds can accumulate nitrates. Ensiling reduces nitrates by 30–45%.

**PROBLEM / TOPIC:**

Sorghum-sudan hybrids and Johnson grass have the potential to cause acute, fatal cyanide (prussic acid) poisoning. Immature forage under 2 feet tall can be dangerous. Frost, freeze, physical damage, and herbicide damage may temporarily increase the risk for grazing cattle. Cyanide is lost during ensiling and hay production.

Perilla Mint, oak (buds, young green leaves and acorns), Senna sp.(sicklepod and coffeesenna) and bluegreen algae bloom are the most important “toxic plants” in the region.

These topics will be discussed and illustrated with photographs.

**ACTION:**

Producers will be better informed as to the risks and prevention of these potential toxic hazards.

**IMPACT:**

Informed producers less likely to suffer sudden economic loss associated with these potential toxic plant hazards