



My pastures contain a lot of dallisgrass and I have noticed that my animals get spooked real easy. Is there a connection?

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Possibly! Dallisgrass staggers is increasingly common in pastures that contain a large amount of dallisgrass. This disease is caused by a toxin(s) produced by an ergot-like fungus that infects the seedheads of dallisgrass. Animals that consume substantial amounts of the dallisgrass seedheads will often exhibit uncontrolled twitching and sudden movements, are easily spooked, and will often run when startled. In many cases, the animals will become so spooked that they will attempt to run through or jump fences or panels and may hurt themselves or persons that happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Death from dallisgrass staggers is rare but it can cause death indirectly (e.g., drowning in a pond, falling off of a steep slope, etc.). In the most severe cases, however, the animals will go down, convulse, and even die.

The only treatment is to remove the animals from the affected areas and provide them with an alternative forage/feed source. Usually, if the toxins are removed from the diet and the animals are safely confined, recovery from the poisoning can be complete.

Read these articles for more information about dallisgrass staggers:

- [Dallisgrass Poisoning Can Occur in Late Summer](#) (NC State Univ.)
- [Dallisgrass Ergot](#) (Texas A&M Univ.)

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