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DIVISION OF RESEARCH & EXTENSION

Keeping Milk and Animal Feeds Safe from Aflatoxin

Aflatoxin is Harmful to your Health and to your Animals

Aflatoxin is a toxin produced by fungi (*Aspergillus flavus* and *Parasiticus Fungus*). It can be found in animal feeds (Aflatoxin B1) and is usually shed in milk (Aflatoxin M1) when a lactating animal feed on feeds contaminated with aflatoxin. Symptoms of acute mycotoxicosis are nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhea. Symptoms of chronic mycotoxicosis are reduced food/feed intake, reduced growth and development, suppression of the immune system, some types of cancer, fetal malformation, birth defects, disturbed embryonic development during pregnancy and reduced milk production in animals. The same symptoms may also be observed in humans.



Feeds with moulds

Sources of aflatoxin in the farm

Animal feeds such as feed concentrates, cereal grains, soybean products, oil cakes from groundnuts and fishmeal, pasture, hay, straw, and silage are prone to aflatoxin contamination. This is due to high moisture content if not well dried and the availability of nutrients to the fungi and high chances of insect infestation. These conditions allow for the fungi to produce aflatoxin as a by-product of their metabolism. Aflatoxin is heat resistant and may persist in dairy products made from milk contaminated with aflatoxin.



Feeds safe and free from moulds

How to reduce Aflatoxin

The practices that ensure feeds and milk are free from aflatoxin include:

1. Allowing for good ventilation in feed storage area
2. Raising the store above the ground to reduce insect infestation and dampness of feeds in rainy season
3. Ensuring that hay, straw and silage are completely dry before storage.
4. Feed concentrates such as dairy meal, cereal grains, soybean products and oil cakes from groundnuts and fishmeal should be checked for presence of moulds (thread like) before being fed to animals.
5. Commercial animal feeds should be bought from certified agrovets and feed outlets.
6. Feed grains and field crops should be kept free from insect infestation when in the field and also after harvesting.
7. Discouraging the intake of raw milk at home and ensuring its safety by boiling before consumption.



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