**Lolium spp**

**Common name:**
Ryegrass, Perennial ryegrass,

**Palatability to Livestock:**
High at all stages.

**Toxicity to Goats:**
Low risk.

**Toxicity to Other Species:**
Potentially toxic to sheep, cattle and horses.

**Poisonous Principle:**
. Lolitremes, and sporidesmin,
. Corynetoxins and ergot toxins,
. Nitrates.

**Effects:**
*Signs and symptoms;*
. “Ryegrass staggers”.
. Lolitremes can cause severe incoordination, together with severe body tremors.
. Sporidesmin can cause liver damage that results in photosensitization of unpigmented or unprotected skin areas, particularly the face and head.
. Ergot toxins can cause hyperthermia, together with growth, lactation and reproduction problems.

**Health and Production Problems;**
. Cessation of lolitremes in the diet is followed by recovery within days.
. Full recovery from sporidesmin may take months, otherwise chronic ill thrift is possible, or death.
. Keep stock off rye grass when rapid regrowth occurs after rain.
. Stock may drown if too much effort is required to access water.

**Treatment;**
. Keep stock quiet, and remove them from affected pasture, until ryegrass matures.
. Both forms of poisoning can be lethal.

**Integrated Control Strategy:**
. Be aware of potential stock problems.

**Comments:**
. Tall, hairless, perennial, or annual, tufted grass, up to 90 cms high, with erect or spreading stems, growing in winter and spring.
. Leaf blades are long, with two ear-like extensions where they join the stem, soft bright green and narrow.
. Flowerhead is a spike.
. Toxins have been derived from a parasitic fungus.
. Ryegrass staggers shows itself in animals grazing short dried-up grass, with little leaf, after mowing for hay, short regrowth, or stemmy.
. Poisoning is more common from January to May, young animals are most affected.
. This plant is only affected by these problems in particular geographic areas, and then only in some years.
. Pollen can cause allergies in humans.
. Flowering is from spring to summer.

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**Further Reading:**

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