Health and Disease Issues

Bloat – Ammonia Induced

Ammonia-induced bloat (as opposed to frothy-bloat) results from ruminants eating feed containing high levels of rumen-degradable nitrogen. In the rumen, the ingested nitrogen is rapidly converted to ammonia, which is then converted into microbial protein and other forms of nitrogen. The ingestion of excessive quantities of such nitrogen can result in a build-up of ammonia gas in the rumen.

Predisposing Factors:

Rations high in rumen-degradable protein (such as legume based silage) or urea

Signs and Symptoms:

- Abnormally high alkali levels in blood or body fluids
- Rumen stasis (cessation of normal rumen contractions)
- Lack of belching to release stomach gas
- Bloating (gut distension).

Control and Prevention:

The following management practices are recommended:

- Provide a high energy concentrate. This concentrate provides the extra energy required to metabolise the high levels of nitrogen, and thus reduces the build-up of ammonia gas.
- Minimise the proportion of feeds containing high levels of rumen degradable protein.

Treatment:

- 60ml of paraffin oil or similar
- Induce animals to walk until eructation (belching)
- Provide low quality hay to stimulate rumen function.