

## **DIAGNOSIS AND RESPONSE TO FESCUE TOXICOSIS IN A CENTRAL KENTUCKY HORSE FARM: AN EXTENSION CASE STUDY.**

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A central Kentucky thoroughbred horse farm experienced a high incidence of fescue toxicosis symptoms in pregnant and foaling mares during early 2017. The University of Kentucky Plant and Soil Science Forage Group was contacted by the farm at the advice of the consulting veterinarian. After a farm visit, the farm agreed to a program of pasture evaluation. Fields were sampled for species composition, endophyte infection level, and ergovaline content. Toxic levels of tall fescue were found and the farm began an aggressive program of fescue eradication in selected fields to eliminate fescue toxicosis. As a result of the work of the UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program, the farm avoided exposing pregnant mares to toxic tall fescue. As a result, the farm experienced no dystocia (difficulty in foaling), fewer thickened placentas (red bags) and no foal losses due to tall fescue in 2018. Dystocia, thickened placentas and foal loss are indicators of fescue toxicity in pregnant mares. Improved pasture management and avoidance of tall fescue resulted in four more live foals and greatly reduced veterinary costs in 2018 compared to 2017. The economic impact of having four more foals was estimated to be \$428,000 using the 2015-17 three-year average Keeneland September yearling sale figures.

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