



BLOAT IN ORGANIC CATTLE

Guidance

Bloat is an abnormal condition in ruminants characterized by a distention of the rumen, usually seen on an animal's upper left side, owing to an accumulation of gases.

Bloat is caused by an accumulation of gas in the cow's rumen. It usually falls within one of two categories: frothy or gassy. In mild cases, the cow belches and releases gas, but if abnormal fermentation occurs, gas may fill the rumen. The enlarged rumen puts pressure on blood vessels and restricts breathing; if the condition is not treated, death will occur.

Bloat occurs most commonly on young, lush legume pastures (particularly clovers). Moisture on the pasture (rain or dew) increases the occurrence of bloat, particularly in springtime or early summer because of the rapid fermentation of these highly digestible, early growth forages producing excess gas in the rumen. When this happens, soluble proteins are rapidly released and attacked by slime-producing bacteria. The slime forms a stable protein foam and fermentation gases buildup under this layer and the cow cannot expel them.

NOP REGULATIONS AND PCO POLICY

The National Organic Program (NOP) regulations require that livestock producers establish and maintain preventive livestock health care practices. When preventive practices and veterinary biologics are inadequate to prevent a sickness, such as bloat, a producer may administer synthetic medications, provided that such medications are allowed according to the NOP regulations. If allowed medications fail, you must not withhold a medical treatment from a sick animal in an effort to preserve its organic status. All appropriate medications must be used to restore an animal to health when methods acceptable to organic production fail. Livestock treated with a prohibited substance must be clearly identified and shall not be sold, labeled, or represented as organically produced. §205.238

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SYMPTOMS OF BLOAT

The symptoms of bloat may include:

- no longer grazing
- a reluctance to move
- distended left abdomen
- appear distressed - vocalize, eyes bulging
- strain to urinate and defecate
- rapid breathing - mouth may be open with tongue protruding
- staggering

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

To prevent bloat, allow only gradual access to legume pasture. It may be beneficial to feed dry hay in barn before

turning out onto pasture to reduce appetite. Since wet pasture leads to bloat, avoid turning cattle out on wet or dewy legume pasture. Allow sunlight to dry it.

TREATMENT PRACTICES

Poloxalene is allowed for the emergency treatment of bloat but is not allowed as a preventive. For mild bloat, cows may be removed from pasture and fed dry hay. For severe cases, a stomach tube may be passed. For life threatening emergencies, a hole may be punched in rumen with a trocar (have your veterinarian provide you with proper training and tools).

APPROVED INPUTS

All inputs must be reviewed and approved by PCO prior to use, so be sure to check with us or consult a current PCO Approved Materials List, OMRI, or WSDA list prior to purchasing or using a product. PCO does not endorse any of the products listed in this guidance document. This is not an all-inclusive list and other inputs may be allowed. Please contact PCO if you have any questions on materials or restrictions.

- **Vegetable oil** – conventional vegetable oil is allowed but must not be administered in the absence of illness. Records must be kept documenting specific animal treated, treatment/dosage used, and duration of treatment. §205.238(b)
- **TheraBloat Drench Concentrate** by Zoetis is allowed for emergency treatment of bloat only. §205.603(a)(21) It must not be administered in the absence of illness. Records must be kept documenting specific animal treated, treatment/dosage used, and duration of treatment. §205.238(b)

PCO is not endorsing the efficacy of any of the approved treatments, and producers should work with a trained professional to treat any distressed animals.

RESOURCES

- <http://articles.extension.org/pages/67227/organic-dairy-herd-health:-managing-disease-in-the-organic-herd>