

Toxins in Forage Grasses?

Many horse owners won't feed fescues to their animals for fear of toxins in the grasses.

Here's what you need to know:

The toxins in question are produced by a fungus termed "endophytes".

- Endophytes naturally occur in several types of grasses, with the purpose of improving plant vigor and health.
- Each type of grass contains different amounts of endophytes. Turf-type grasses are often bred to contain higher than normal levels of endophytes, while forage-type grasses are bred to contain zero or low levels of endophytes.
- Grasses are only infected with endophytes through the seed; they cannot be infected from other grasses.
- Upon consumption of endophyte-enhanced grasses (ie. turf grass or lawn grass), livestock may get very sick.
- The best way to avoid feeding high levels of endophytes to your animals is to seed forage-type grasses that are not endophyte-enhanced.

Richardson Seed forage mixes NEVER contain endophyte-enhanced grasses.

How to Seed or Overseed Pasture

- The best time to seed is in spring and fall. Avoid seeding in the heat of summer or when in danger of frost. Consistent soil temperatures should be around 10 degrees Celsius.
- Prepare field for seeding. Perform tillage and weed control before seeding.* Apply fertilizer and lime as determined by a soil test.
- Broadcast or drill a forage-type seed mix specially formulated for horses at the recommended seeding rate. If broadcasting, it is advised to seed half in one direction, followed by a second pass with the remaining seed at right angles to the first.
- After broadcasting, lightly rake then roll the seeded area. Be sure the seed makes good contact with the soil; however, do not cover the seed with more than 1/4 inch of soil.
- Keep the area moist through establishment.
- Grass takes a year to become fully established. It is advisable to restrict grazing in the first season, not letting the pasture be grazed shorter than 3 inches.
- Depending on field conditions, annual overseeding may be necessary.

*Always follow the directions on the chemical labels.

