

Fungal abortions: is this really happening?

Almost all homegrown feeds contain some fungal spores. When the temperature and humidity are correct, these spores will grow and multiply to create fungi (“moulds”). Consequently, mycotoxins can be produced by these moulds and can reduce animal health and productivity. Feeds containing significant levels of moulds can usually be diluted down to a safer level. Feeds containing very high levels of total moulds (over 1,000,000 cfu/g) generally should not be fed at all, or only in low restricted amounts. Tolerable levels are much lower for non-ruminant animals than for ruminants. Without exception, significant levels of moulds will affect performance.

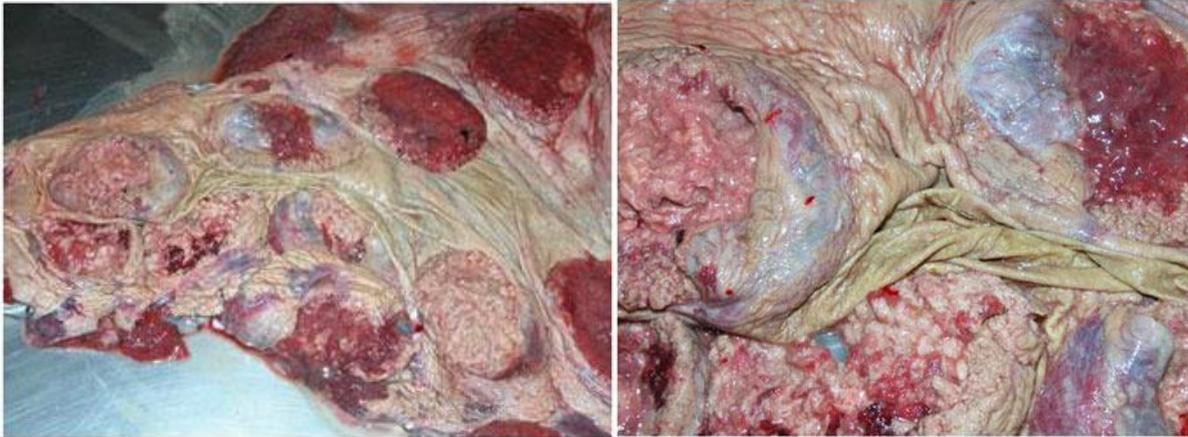
Symptoms of mould induced problems

- Liver, lung or kidney damage
- Reduced weight gain and performance
- Abortions and reproductive problems
- Digestive upset and reduced feed intake
- Compromised immune function
- Diarrhea, bloating and hemorrhage

Mycotic abortions

Mycotic infections are a common cause of abortion in individual animals, causing some 3 to 10 % of all abortions. The infection usually occurs after an episode of grain overload or fungal pneumonia. The toxins in moldy feeds will enter the bloodstream and the pregnant uterus. Abortions and infertility may result if the toxic elements from the moldy feed enter and infect the placenta. Severe infection of the placenta may result; it is seen as a leathery thickening of areas in between the cotyledons.





Mycotic placentitis - Photos: Dr. Mark Swendrowski, MAFRI

In 25 % of mycotic abortions, fungus invades the fetus, and red or white rings and worm-like lesions are seen. If the fetus remains in the uterus for any length of time after death, these lesions may no longer be visible. The afterbirth may be retained, causing even more problems. The infection may pass through the placenta and into the fetus, so plaques or crusts of fungus will develop on the skin of the fetus. Culturing the organism from aborted tissues will provide the diagnosis. Abortion can occur any time from the fourth month of pregnancy to full term.

For further information contact the author:



Radka BORUTOVA MVDr., PhD.

Technical Manager

BIOMIN Holding GmbH

Industriestrasse 21

3130 Herzogenburg, Austria

radka.borutova@biomin.net

