

# Vancouver Island Forage Advisor

TerraLink Horticulture Inc.

January 2009

## Pests

### Does Your Orchardgrass Have a Virus?

There have been reported incidents of Cocksfoot Mottle Virus (CMV) in orchardgrass fields of coastal BC. Although not a new disease, there is increased awareness of the virus in recent years. CMV is considered the most serious disease affecting the persistence of orchardgrass.



Orchardgrass plant infected with CMV

#### How can you tell if your fields are infected?

The best time to monitor for this disease is late March to early April. CMV is more likely to attack older plants than new stands. Infected plants are scattered around the field, not found close together and have a yellow appearance (see photos). CMV does not affect forage quality, however, plants that become infected with CMV lose vigour and eventually die. As the stand ages, more and more plants become infected and die off. Orchardgrass plants become less abundant while weeds invade the open patches.

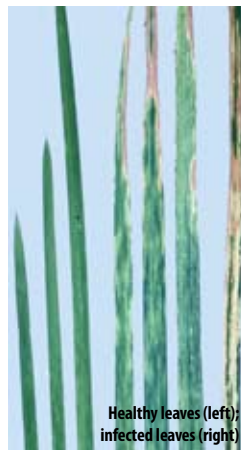
#### How does a field get infected?

The virus does not come from the soil or the seed. Generally, CMV is spread from infected fields by harvesting equipment.

#### What's the best way to deal with an infected field?

There are not any anti-viral agents available that can be used to treat infected fields. Since the disease is carried by equipment, avoid going from infected to uninfected fields without first cleaning and sterilizing your machines. Be sure to harvest new fields before older ones and clean the equipment before returning to the new fields. Once a field is identified as being infected and is ready for renovation, the best preventative measure is to seed with certified CMV-resistant orchardgrass seed.

Agriculture Canada (in Agassiz), in conjunction with Richardson Seed, spent 10-15 years selecting forage varieties for coastal BC that exhibit outstanding CMV-resistance, in addition to other important traits such as yield. The selections are now being produced commercially for us. These two varieties are the only certified varieties and are the highest yielding selections of CMV-resistant varieties available in the marketplace. There is an earlier-maturing variety (AC Cheam Orchardgrass) and a medium-maturing variety (AC Chilliwack Orchardgrass), which are available mixed together, with or without tall fescue. They can also be added to a custom mix of your specifications. Please inquire.



Healthy leaves (left);  
infected leaves (right)

Come visit us at the Islands  
Farm Seminar, January 28, 2009  
at the Nanaimo Royal Canadian  
Legion!

## Toxic Weeds

### Tansy Ragwort on Vancouver Island

Tansy ragwort is a typical weed of pastures, roadsides and waste areas. It grows up to 2 meters in height but is commonly found flowering at about 1 to 1.5 meters. It is in the sunflower family and has compound flowers which are yellow and clustered at the top of the plant. The root is a taproot. Leaves grow alternately (not across from each other) and are divided into lobes.

As a dairy farmer, why should you be concerned about Tansy ragwort? The first strike against this plant is that it is poisonous to cattle, horses and goats. Tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaeae*) contains alkaloid compounds which become toxic when combined with liver enzymes. This toxicity can accumulate over time and eventually lead to liver failure and death. Most cases of poisoning are from cattle consuming trace amounts of the plant over an extended period of time. Cattle can be poisoned after eating 2-8 percent of their body weight. You should avoid grazing horses and cattle on pastures with 5% or more Tansy ragwort.

The other strike against this plant is that it is a non-native, invasive weed. It invades woodlands, pastures and disturbed areas throughout the South coast of BC including Southern Vancouver Island. It is listed by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands as a noxious weed throughout the province. Tansy ragwort has the

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Tansy ragwort

## Healthy Cows

# Improve Selenium Levels with Selcote Ultra

You may have seen articles from time to time on Selcote Ultra. Let's review what it is and why it is important.

Selcote Ultra is a granule containing both slow and fast release selenium in selenates of barium and sodium. Applied with fertilizer, the selenium is passively taken up by grass plants. Selenium available to cows via the forage is absorbed more effectively than inorganic selenium supplied in rations or shots.

Soils on Vancouver Island and in the Fraser Valley are naturally deficient in selenium, and acid soil conditions cause plant available selenates to transform to unavailable forms. Thus it is necessary in these areas to continue to add selenium. The maximum amount of selenium allowed in feed or in injections may not provide enough for optimum stock health.

capability of spreading quickly owing to its potential to produce 150,000 seeds per plant. The invasion of your pastureland by this weed can reduce the available forage by fifty percent or more if allowed to grow uncontrolled.

How can this weed be controlled? The first step is to prevent Tansy ragwort from becoming established in your area. Hand pulling small patches and intensively mowing larger areas can be effective. Prevent the weed from going to seed by controlling it before it flowers. Chemical control with Banvel (dicamba) and 2,4-D is effective on the seedlings and young rosette stage. These stages will be present following germination in early spring and mid fall. Some naturally occurring insects, such as the cinnabar moth and the ragwort flea beetle, also provide a significant level of control. However, there are no commercially available biological controls sold at this time.

#### References:

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/tansy.htm>  
[http://www.coastalinvasiveplants.com/invasive\\_plants.php?id=36](http://www.coastalinvasiveplants.com/invasive_plants.php?id=36)  
<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/weedguid/tansyrag.htm>  
[http://weedsbc.ca/pdf/tansy\\_ragwort.pdf](http://weedsbc.ca/pdf/tansy_ragwort.pdf)

### Did you know..?

**TerraLink has been involved with the forage trials conducted by the Comox Valley Farmers' Institute. Give us a call for more information.**

Typically our "native" forages have less than 50 ppb of selenium. Applied at the rate of one to one and a half pounds of Selcote Ultra per acre, this should raise forage levels to the range of 100 to 300 ppb.

Deficiency of selenium in dairy cows can result in considerable health problems. Consistent use of Selcote Ultra will reduce White Muscle Disease, improve embryo retention, maximize sperm production and mobility, improve antibody production and disease response, and improve the birthing process, among others.

Selcote Ultra is available on Vancouver Island exclusively through Top Shelf Feeds in Duncan. They can be contacted at 250-746-5101.

# SAVE with TerraLink

Mention this ad when you book 20 bags of grass seed and we'll split the freight with you! If you don't need that much yourself, get together with your friends and family to consolidate your orders and we'll pay half the freight charge.

Or contact us to find a dealer in your area.



Offer only available to retail customers. Some conditions apply.



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