Column Name- The Heartland Minute

By: Lindsay Shorter

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Agriculture Extension Agent

"Mycotoxins, Fumonisin, Aflatoxin- Should I be worried?"

Before this life as an Extension agent, out of college I worked for a grain company as a grain trader. My days were spent working with farmers, and end users alike. Moving commodities across our state and surrounding states. Many of my end users were growing facilities for cattle, hogs, even chickens. And nothing could throw a wrench in your logistical plan quite like getting a load of corn getting rejected for Aflatoxin. It's being reported that this year (and rightfully so considering the weather we have had) is going to be a bad year for mycotoxins. So what is mycotoxins, and should producers be concerned?

The fall weather patterns in Kansas were conducive to a buildup of mycotoxins in feedstuffs, particularly harvested grain and livestock feed. Which means, livestock producers should be on the lookout for feed that may contain unsafe concentrations of mycotoxins, or mold toxins. Kansas State University Veterinarian and Toxicologist Steve Ensley reported that they have already seen some death losses associated with mycotoxins in pigs and horses and have found high concentrations of fumonisin and aflatoxin in samples. Ensley is concerned that it maybe a bigger health issue statewide than the localized cases they have seen thus far. These molds are present in agricultural environments all the time, but when they get on the right substrate with the right temperature and humidity, then they grow and produce a toxin. Kansas' summer drought conditions led to a heightened risk of aflatoxin in the state's grain crop, while wet conditions during the 2018 harvest also made that grain susceptible to fumonisin.

Producers who are concerned that they may have high levels of these toxins, can work with the Greenwood County Extension office to get samples submitted and tested. Producers need to work on obtaining a reliable sample. Ensley says the best time to collect a sample is anytime the grain is already

moving (field to bin, bin to feeding, etc.) Anytime that the grain is moving and you can get multiple samples, that's the best way to obtain a random sample.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Lindsay Shorter, at lindsayshorter@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.