

# Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic (2002) Ltd



238-116 Ave  
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 3C8  
(250) 782-1080

**Dr. Zoë Ross**  
**Dr. Mike Ross**  
**Dr. Heather Weaver**

**Dr. Andrew Hodges**  
**Dr. Cathy Saker**  
**Dr. Sandy Jameson**

## Alsike Clover Poisoning

Clover Poisoning is a common condition seen in the Peace region. Alsike clover has a toxin in it that can cause liver damage and photosensitivity in horses. Alsike clover flowers can be red or white and can be distinguished from non-harmful clover, as alsike clover has no watermark (inverted white v) on its leaf. Both red and white clover have watermarks.

### Clinical Signs

Signs can vary from general signs of liver disease to photosensitization of the skin.

Signs of liver disease:

Icterus - yellow gums and third eye lids

Weight loss

Lethargy or nervousness

Neurologic abnormalities including but not limited to a staggering uncoordinated gait and

Seizures

Bloodwork can be done to help determine the extent of the liver damage

Signs of photosensitization:

Generally areas with white hair (no pigment in the skin) that get a lot of sun like the nose, back and white areas on the lower limb (especially pastern) become red and crusty and ooze serum. In severe cases, the skin can slough leaving permanent scars.

Occasionally other areas of skin can also be affected.

### Treatment

- Remove from pasture/clover
- If photosensitization occurs, move into a barn out of the sun and apply zinc ointment to affected areas to protect them from further damage from UV rays.
- Affected skin:
  - clean areas affected skin

- apply Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic “Scratches” ointment or T-zon cream to affected areas
- Keep out of sunlight
- Keep affected areas dry
- There is no magic treatment for liver damage although the liver is one of the few organs which is capable of regeneration. There are some things that can be done to ease the stress to the liver during the recovery period:
  - Multiple small meals/day rather than one or two large ones
  - Feed grass hay, no clover or alfalfa as they are high in protein and add stress to the liver
  - Add soaked beet pulp with up to one cup of vegetable oil to diet
  - Add 50 % dextrose to water (10ml /L) if the horse will drink it
  - In an acute case, veterinarians may decide to treat a horse with steroids to reduce the inflammation in the liver
  - Vitamin supplementation – discuss with your veterinarian
  - Veterinarian may recommend a very specific hepatic diet in severe cases

### **Prevention:**

- No clover in hay or pasture is ideal but if this can't be achieved then keep the total alsike clover to less than 5% of the total diet
- Chemical control of alsike clover may be necessary in pastures with high amounts of clover