



Poisonous Plants in Pastures

Livestock and horses can be injured or poisoned by many plants that grow in a pasture setting. In productive pastures, livestock will usually eat only the grasses and legumes to which they are accustomed, but when pastures are overgrazed, animals often consume poisonous plants they would not eat if given a choice.

There is no grazing season entirely free of toxic plants. Early spring pastures may need special attention because of lack of desirable grasses and legumes. Some poisonous plants are a temporary threat to animals because they represent a disproportionately high percentage of the pasture in early spring. Often, during dry, mid-summer months there is a lack of forage growth, so livestock will turn to the remaining green plants, including toxic weeds and cultivated plants. Some weeds are more toxic as a result of mid-summer drought, killing frosts in the fall, or physical damage to the plants during the course of the growing season.

Good pasture management is one of the most important steps in preventing animal suffering or loss from toxic plants. Keeping the desirable forage species productive throughout the grazing season reduces the possibility of animals grazing on poisonous plants.

Most poisonous weeds and cultivated plants can be controlled. It may be practical to simply fence off infested areas so that animals do not have access to particularly hazardous weeds. An alternative method of controlling poisonous weeds is to spray them with approved herbicides. Another alternative is to physically or mechanically remove the problem plants.

The following tables list some of the plants that can cause sickness and sometimes death to grazing livestock and horses. If you suspect an animal has eaten something poisonous, it is important to call your veterinarian immediately.

Keep telephone numbers for your veterinarian and the National Animal Poison Control Center (1-888-426-4435) in a convenient location. A service of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, every day, by veterinary toxicologists.

Because the center receives no government or private funding, there is a \$45 charge per case, though, at no extra charge, the Center will do as many follow-up calls as necessary in critical cases, and at the owner's request will contact their veterinarian directly. The Center also provides, by fax, specific treatment protocols and current literature citations when needed.

Poisonous Plants in a Pasture Setting

Plant	Part of Plant that is poisonous	Where plant is usually located	Livestock that are effected	Symptoms
Black Nightshade	Fruit Leaves Vegetation	Open Dry Woods Cultivated Fields Pastures Fence Rows Waste Areas Farm Yards	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep	Loss of appetite; Diarrhea; Marked thirst; General body weakness; Inability to stand; Abdominal pain Advanced Symptoms: Unconsciousness; Death may follow in 1, 2 or 3 days
Bracken Fern	Entire plant (Fresh or Dried)	Open Fields Open Woodlands Low Ground Dry Rocky Soils	Cattle Horses Sheep	General weakness; Incoordination; Light coloration of mouth lining and eyes; Nervousness; Anemia Advanced Symptoms: Fever; Anemia; Bloody nasal or rectal discharges; Death
Buttercup	Fresh leaves Fresh flowers (Dried plant material in hay is not poisonous)	Pastures Meadows Roadsides	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine?	Inflammation and blisters where plant juice touched the animal; Mouth blisters cause drooling; Loss of appetite; Stomach irritation; Colic; Diarrhea; Slow pulse Advanced Symptoms: Convulsions; Sinking of eyes in their sockets; Blindness; May end in death
Cherry Black Cherry Choke Cherry Wild Cherry	Leaves Twigs Bark Pit (Stone/Seed)	Fence Rows Open Woods	Cattle Horses Sheep Swine	Anxiety; Staggering; Falling down; Rapid and labored breathing; convulsions; rolling of eyes; Tongue hanging out of mouth; Loss of sensation; Dilated pupils Advanced Symptoms: Quiet; Bloats; Dies within a few hours of ingestion
Common Milkweed	Entire plant	Dry Open Areas Pastures Around Woods Roadsides Waste Areas Cultivated Fields	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep	Depression; Weakness; Staggering; Seizures; Increased temperature; Loss of appetite; Excitable; Rapid weak pulse; Difficult breathing Advanced Symptoms: Dilated pupils; Convulsions; Coma; Death

Plant	Part of Plant that is poisonous	Where plant is usually located	Livestock that are effected	Symptoms
Field Horsetail	All parts (Green or Dried)	Poorly Drained Soils Low Sandy Acid Soils Cultivated Fields Roadsides Waste Areas Woods	Horses Lesser degree – Sheep Rarely – Cattle	Symptoms are slow to develop; Appetite remains normal until near the end of illness; Weakness; Staggering gait; Excitability Advanced Symptoms: Constipated; Paralysis; Muscles rigid; Pulse rate increases and weakens; Body extremities become cold before death; Animal becomes calm and comatose
Jimson Weed	All parts (especially seeds and leaves) In hay Seeds in grain	Cultivated Fields Farm Yards Manure Piles Animal Paddock	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep	Symptoms vary in time; Thirst; Impaired vision: Fast weak pulse; Nausea; Loss of muscular coordination; Violent aggressive behavior; Trembling Ingestion of small amounts produces symptoms; Larger amounts – death
Lambsquarter	Foliage	Cultivated Fields Pastures Roadsides Waste Areas Open Fields	Young Cattle Sheep Swine Lesser degree – Adult cattle Horses	Symptoms appear within 1 to 4 hours after consumption; Labored breathing: Rapid weak pulse Advanced Symptoms: Muscle tremors; Becomes weak, prostrate and dies
Marsh Marigold	All parts of mature plants Young plants may be less toxic (Dried in hay is reported harmless)	Wet meadows Swamps Bogs Shallow water Wet shaded Woodlands Low-lying areas near drainage ditches	Cattle Horses	Stomach upset; Acute inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract; Vomiting; Restlessness; Colic; Depression; Nervous excitation; Twitching of eyelids; Bloody urine; Diarrhea Advanced Symptoms: Weak pulse; low breathing; weakness and death Cattle: Reduced milk production; Tainted milk red in color and bitter tasting
Mountain Laurel	Flowers Twigs Green Plant Parts	Woodlands Fence Roads Edge of Woods Landscaping around buildings and homes	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Appearances of symptoms averages 6 hours; Loss of appetite; Repeated swallowing; Belching up and swallowing of cud without chewing; Profuse salivation; Watering of mouth, eyes, and nose; Slow pulse; Low blood pressure; Incoordination; Dullness; Depression; Vomiting; Frequent defecation Advanced Symptoms: Weak; Difficulty in breathing; Coma; Death

Plant	Part of Plant that is poisonous	Where plant is usually located	Livestock that are effected	Symptoms
Pigweed	Foliage	Cultivated Fields Pastures Roadsides Waste Areas Open Fields	Young Cattle Sheep Swine (Critical) Lesser degree: Adult Cattle Horses	Rapid onset of weakness; Trembling and incoordination 5 to 10 days after ingestion; Pig may go into coma and die; Body temperature remains normal
Poison Hemlock	All parts	Waste Areas Roadsides Edges of Fields Dry Ditches	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Symptoms occur within an hour after ingestion; Nervousness; Trembling; Pain; Dilated pupils; Weakened and slow heartbeat; Drowsiness; Nausea; Vomiting; Coldness in extremities or the entire body; Labored breathing; Bloating; Diarrhea (may be bloody); Symptoms usually begin in the hind or lower extremities Advanced Symptoms: Paralysis; Convulsions; Respiratory failure; Coma; Death
Pokeweed Pokeberry Inkberry	All parts (especially roots)	Waste Areas Meadows Edges of Woods Woodlands Barnyards Lowlands Fields Fencerows	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Symptoms occur 2 or more hours after plants are eaten; Gastrointestinal cramps; Retching spasms; Vomiting; Diarrhea Advanced Symptoms: Convulsions; Perspiration; Weakened respiration; Weakened pulse; Salivation; Impaired vision; Death may result
Oaks	Acorns Young shoots (especially eaten in quantity)	Woods Swamps Landscaping around building and homes	Cattle Horses Sheep Swine	Loss of appetite; Initial constipation (hard, dark fecal pellets) passing to diarrhea Advanced Symptoms: Death If animal lives: Inflammation of the stomach and the intestines; Thirst; Excessive urination
Red Maple	Wilted Leaves (toxic for one month)	Woods Swamps Landscaping around buildings and homes	Horses (only 50% of horses that consume leaves are affected)	Symptoms appear within 18 to 24 hours after consumption of red maple leaves; Yellow to brown discoloration of the mucous membranes (especially gums and eyelids); Urine becomes dark red to brown; Animal becomes feverish Advanced Symptoms: Over 60% of horses affected dies, usually from destruction of hemoglobin in the blood
Rhododendron Azaleas	Foliage of some species is toxic Consider all species potentially poisonous	Woodlands Fence Roads Edge of Woods Landscaping around buildings and homes	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Loss of appetite; Repeated swallowing; Profuse salivation; Tearing of eyes; Nasal discharge; Slow pulse; Low blood pressure; Incoordination; Dullness; Depression: Vomiting Advanced Symptoms: Weak; Difficulty in breathing; Convulsions; Paralysis; Coma; Death

Plant	Part of Plant that is poisonous	Where plant is usually located	Livestock that are effected	Symptoms
Saint Johnswort	All plant parts (is toxic when in hay)	Open Fields Meadows Roadsides Pastures Waste Areas Landscaping around buildings and homes	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Photosensitivity in the presence of sunlight; Skin develops dermatitis; Inflammation of unpigmented portion of the skin; Affected area becomes sore and reddened and may peel; Tongue and mouth may be affected; Wounds heal slowly; Animals may produce hairless scars Advanced Symptoms: Death may result from infection and gangrene
Sheepl Laurel Lambkill June Pink	Green plant parts	Moist Wooded Areas Meadows Bogs	Cattle Goats Horses? Sheep (Severe) Swine	Drooling; Watery eyes; Runny nose; Vomiting; Complete or Partial blindness; Drowsiness Advanced Symptoms; Convulsions; Paralysis; Coma; Death
Skunk Cabbage Jack-in-the-Pulpit Indian Turnip	Leaves Roots Corms	Woods Thickets Moist Areas Swamps and Bogs Swales	Death has been induced experimentally in animal feeding studies	Nausea; Vomiting; Diarrhea; Inflammation of mucous membranes; Inflammation of throat and mouth can cause choking
Sudangrass Sudan x Sorghum hybrids	Vegetative portion of the plant during drought conditions or after frost Not the grain	Cultivated Fields	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Nitrate poisoning; Symptoms seen within 1 to 4 hours after consumption; Labored breathing; Rapid, weak pulse Advanced Symptoms: Muscle tremors; General weakening; Prostrate; Death
Water Hemlock	All plant parts (green or dried)	Marshes Swamps Ditches Stream Marshy Meadows Wet Pastures Edge of bodies of water	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Symptoms seen within 1 to 4 hours after consumption; Excessive salivation; Muscle tremors; Spasmodic convulsions; Abdominal pain; Increased temperatures; Pupils dilated; Diarrhea; Irregular pulse and heart rate; Behavioral abnormalities Advanced Symptoms: Complete paralysis; Respiratory failure; Death
Yew Family	Entire Plant	Landscaping around buildings and homes	Cattle Goats Horses Sheep Swine	Gastric distress; Diarrhea; Vomiting; Tremors; Dilated pupils; Breathing difficulties; Weakness; Fatigue; Collapse Advanced Symptoms: Convulsions; Coma; Slow heart rate; Circulatory failure; Death Death can be so rapid that few symptoms appear

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