

Plants Poisonous to Livestock

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Several species of poisonous plants are distributed throughout Missouri, and many of them are commonly found in native or improved pastures. Selected species that are toxic to various livestock are illustrated in this guide. Space does not permit inclusion of all the different plant species that have caused livestock losses in Missouri.

A common characteristic of several poisonous plants is a disagreeable taste that ordinarily discourages livestock from grazing them. Some species are poisonous only during certain stages of growth. The common cocklebur, a good example, is most poisonous shortly before reaching the two-leaf stage. During this period of growth, cocklebur is exceedingly toxic to pigs but can also harm cattle and sheep. Young, second growth sorghum is another example of toxicity during a specific growth period.

If livestock poisoning occurs, carefully examine the grazing area for poisonous plants. Jimsonweed, snow-on-the-mountain, croton, and wild indigo are commonly found in open areas of the pasture. Shade-loving species include white snakeroot, bracken fern, pokeweed, and buckeye. Black nightshade, water and poison hemlock, and horsetail grow in moist areas and along creeks or ditch banks. Poisonous plants found in cultivated fields include cocklebur, jimsonweed,

milkweed, pigweed, and johnsongrass. Wild cherry, poison ivy, milkweed and pokeweed are found along fences and hedgerows.

Procedure in Cases of Livestock Poisoning

- If you suspect poisoning, call a veterinarian immediately. If death has occurred, examine stomach contents for consumed herbage.
- Identify the poisonous plants. Consult your area agronomist or send suspected plant material to Agronomy Department, College of Agriculture, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.
- Remove livestock from grazing area until all poisonous plants have been destroyed.

Control Measures

- Inspect grazing area and identify poisonous plants that are present.
- Eradicate poisonous plants by mowing or by applying a recommended herbicide before turning livestock into area.
- Provide an adequate supply of salt and minerals for grazing livestock.



Bracken Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*)



Ergot Bodies (*Claviceps purpurea*)



Cocklebur (*Xanthium pennsylvanicum*)

- Make certain that animals have ample supplies of wholesome forage.
- Avoid pasturing livestock on frosted or drought-stricken sorghum.
- Practice good pasture management.

Summary

Many native pastures may have poisonous plants present, but livestock losses may vary considerably.

- An animal may not consume a fatal amount of the poisonous plant.



Buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*)



Croton (*Croton capitatus*)



Horsetail or Scouring Rush (*Equisetum arvense*)



False Indigo (*Baptisia leucantha*)



Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*)

- A plant may be poisonous only at certain stages of growth—and otherwise harmless.
- During periods of scarce grazing, livestock may be forced to eat poisonous plants.
- Poisonous plants may contribute to the death of an animal already suffering from malnutrition or an unidentified illness.

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Jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium*)



Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



Pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflexus*)



Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*)



Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)



Water Hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*)



Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*)



Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*)



Snow-on-the-Mountain (*Euphorbia marginata*)



Soapwort or Bouncing Bet (*Saponaria officinalis*)



White Snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*)



Wild Cherry (*Prunus* spp.)

